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Demise of the 'Special Relationship' - which side has more to lose?

Anita Brookner on Judith Gautier
Roy Jenkins's Baldwin

Gedun Ch'omp'el, Tibetan nationalist and martyr
Commentary: Dennis Potter, Martin Scorsese



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influence around the world, it had had a very different effect upon Britain. Britain sacrificed a quarter of her national wealth to the war and, ultimately, her economic hegemony over a significant part of the globe. The trend would not be apparent for a decade or more. In 1950, Britain's Gross National Product had just ceased to equal that of France and West Germany combined. As late as 1959, though far behind the United States, Britain still possessed the second-largest GNP in the world. But by 1970 Britain had been overtaken by West Germany and was easily matched by France. By 1985, Britain's GNP per capita was less than that of Italy.

Given how far Britain has fallen, it is easy to forget the extraordinary degree of economic power she exercised on the eve of the war. In 1939, the British Empire and the United States together accounted for about 60 per cent of the world's industrial production and controlled roughly three-quarters of the globe's military wealth. At the war's end, the two were the only industrial economies still largely intact. It was natural that Britain and America would now take joint responsibility for redesigning the world economy - developing a system of fixed exchange rates to minimize currency fluctuations, an International Monetary Fund to ensure liquidity, a World Bank to aggregate and direct development finance, a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade to ensure an open trading system. And it was by dint of their joint commitment to this system that it worked well for a quarter of a century: as Richard Gardner shows in his chapter on sterling-dollar diplomacy, the years 1945 to 1970 witnessed the most dramatic and widely-shared economic growth in the history of mankind. World GNP grew from \$300 billion to about \$2,000 billion, world trade from \$30 billion to over \$300 billion. Even allowing for inflation, real incomes tripled, world trade quadrupled.

During these decades, Britain relinquished hegemony over much of southern Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The buoyant world economy rendered the transition from colonialism to independence somewhat easier for these nascent countries than it might otherwise have been. Indeed, the beneficent cycle of world trade and economic growth that characterized these years may itself have reduced their dependence on Britain and further emboldened national elites to demand an end to British rule.

It was a sad temptation to view the demise of

the British Empire as another manifestation of America's cold-war strategy, and several of the contributors to this volume place it within that context. Indeed, Macmillan himself largely accepted the American view that, in his words, "the great issue in this second half of the twentieth century" was "whether the uncommitted peoples of Asia and Africa would swing to the East or to the West", and that the only hope for forestalling Soviet influence lay in accepting the force of local nationalism and seeking to combine it with a respect for equality and economic reform. American impatience with the speed at which Britain acted on this principle sometimes created tensions within the special relationship. On at least one occasion - in the Suez crisis - it led to a complete breakdown.

William Roger Louis in this volume quotes John Foster Dulles, the American cold-warrior Secretary of State, at an exasperating but revealing moment when the Russians were contending with a restive Hungary, and Britain and France were simultaneously confronting a restive Egypt: "It is no less than tragic that at this very time, when we are on the point of winning an immense and long-hoped-for victory over Soviet colonialism in Eastern Europe, we should be forced to choose between following in the footsteps of Anglo-French colonialism in Asia and Africa, or splitting our course away from their course." Dulles's impatience was perhaps understandable. But in retrospect it seems doubtful that the pace of Third World nationalism could have been substantially accelerated or retarded by either America or Britain. To attribute the timing of Britain's withdrawal in Asia and Africa to Anglo-American debate over the Soviet menace in the Third World substantially overestimates the capacities of all three world powers to dictate political outcomes in these regions of the globe.

Max Beloff, in one of the book's more provocative and pointed chapters, concedes that Britain's loss of hegemony was inevitable, but he faults the United States for having failed to take Britain's imperial place. Beloff argues that the difference between the United States and the older imperial powers like Britain lay in the fact that "while they had conscious or unconscious philosophies which to their ruling elites, and at times to wider strata of society, seemed to justify their status and role... the United States is clearly still reluctant to accept its imperial role as anything but an expedient resorted to in self-defence." Lord Beloff's criticism rests on the assumption that America, had it wished, could have asserted the same degree of hegemony over the Third World in the post-war era as Britain had exercised before the war. In this argument we see the same tendency to overestimate the political capacities of the First World and underestimate the nationalistic forces in the Third.

The global political and economic system has evolved beyond the point at which a single nation can exercise imperial hegemony. In one respect, however, Beloff's criticism of the United States is well placed. Since 1970, America has seemed less the leader of the free world than a frustrated actor seeking to impose its will upon it, for its own selfish purposes - seeking to exercise imperial authority, as it were, but unwilling to accept the responsibility that goes with it. America's military, political and economic policies have often seemed calculated to improve or at least maintain America's position at the expense of her allies. It is in this respect that the gradual undoing of the "special relationship" has had, in my view, the most unfortunate of consequences, both for the United States and for the world.

Few nations in history have combined such raw military and economic muscle with so parochial a view of the rest of the globe as does modern America. The vast majority of the citizens of the United States speak no foreign language, encounter few foreigners in their daily lives, read little or nothing about happenings beyond their borders. This attitude of benign neglect of the rest of mankind is a luxury that only a large, naturally wealthy and geographically isolated nation could have maintained for any length of time. Before the Second World War its consequences for the rest of the world were relatively harmless. Since then, however, American ethnocentrism has caused no small problems. The greatest impediment to America's effective lead-

ership of the free world has been her limited ability to understand and collaborate with the rest of the free world.

It is precisely here that the "special relationship" with Britain played such an important role in the quarter-century after the war. In Britain the United States found another nation whose citizens spoke the same language, who shared similar legal and political institutions, not to mention many of the same ancestors, but who, by virtue of geography and history, possessed a different and perhaps broader vision of the world. Here was a people whom Americans could trust: friends and confidants in an unfriendly and confusing world, who provided another perspective, and thus helped America overcome its chronic tendency towards parochialism. Although the evidence is scattered and anecdotal, there is little doubt that during this era American officials often sought the counsel of their British counterparts, and obtained the sort of frank and confidential advice that one can get only from an old and trusted friend whose judgment is deeply valued. To be sure, the two allies at times reinforced each other's delusions. But Britain's advice often comprised a different viewpoint, causing Americans to think again, and to refine or abort a course of action that might not have been adequately thought through.

In this respect America has needed Britain as much as, if not more than, Britain has needed America. But there is an ironic cycle to this relationship. As Britain's economic and political power has waned, each subsequent American administration has come to view Britain more as one among several constituents whose assent is sometimes necessary or useful to legitimize a policy, or who must be mollified and cajoled into accepting a particular American initiative, and less as a special source of wisdom and counsel. (American culture has long tended to discount advice coming from the impecunious: as the Yankee homily goes, "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?") The generation of experts and bureaucrats who now populate the higher reaches of the White House, the National Security Council, the State Department, the Treasury, and the Defense Department have no direct experience and little memory of the "special relationship" in its golden days. To them, increasingly, Britain is just another pestering voice.

This gradual transformation from a special to a not-so-special relationship has in turn loosened the subtle constraints on American foreign policy, rendering it less sensitive to the needs and views of all of America's allies, with the result that the policies that have issued from Washington in more recent years have too often been unilateral, peremptory and wide of the mark. And as American policy has appeared in Britain to diverge ever more from a judicious and responsible path, and American officials seem ever less inclined to consult seriously and in advance with their British counterparts, Britain has understandably begun to withdraw from the relationship, to distance herself from America.

It is this vicious circle, rather than America's failure to take on the modern mantle of British imperialism, as Lord Beloff suggests, or the rise of a more virulent and politically potent anti-Americanism in the British Labour Party, that explains many of the new tensions within the alliance. There have always been currents of anti-Americanism in Britain. The British left has long been hostile to capitalism, wanting to believe that most international conflicts have been prompted more by capitalist injustices than by communist aggression, and that the Russians have been driven more by defensive compulsions than expansionist ambitions. Such views informed the Keep Left group, led by Michael Foot and Richard Crossman, which attacked Bevin's "excessive subservience" to the United States in the 1940s; forty years later they underlay the Labour Party's defence policy paper of August, 1984.

The new and more popular form of anti-Americanism in Britain, as in the rest of Western Europe, I believe, attributable to what appears to be America's growing indifference to her allies and to the effects of her policies on world politics and economics. Sadly, examples abound of the post-war strategy of international economic institutions set up by America and Britain is now coming apart, and United States

economic policies are largely to blame. America refuses to tame her yawning budget deficit which has undermined the stability of world currencies; she continues to contrive balance-of-payments "voluntary restraint agreements" and "voluntary marketing agreements" with trading partners, with the result that world markets for such goods as rapidly becoming cartelized; and she is unrelenting in imposing harsh conditions on the repayment of the Latin American debt. American hawks, thus drying up these potential markets while destabilizing their own democracies.

American defence policy reveals a similar insensitivity. The current administration is so concerned to fluctuate between complete lack of interest in negotiating reductions in either strategic or intermediate-range nuclear weapons, and then, as at the Reykjavik summit meeting, sudden - and shocking - willingness to eliminate offensive ballistic missiles altogether. Last November, the United States intentionally violated the Salt II treaty. The Strategic Defense Initiative, which is likely to escalate the arms race into space, is also likely to be deployed sooner rather than later, thus effectively terminating the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. In the Third World, America seems to have adopted a strategy of supporting communist rebels wherever they arise - backing Nicaragua and Angola. And how has America chosen to lead the free world against terrorism? While the White House solemnly instructed American allies not to bargain with terrorists, Reagan sent arms to Tehran for the release of American hostages in Lebanon.

Ironically, the age-old American ideal of a pristine nation, separate from the rest of the world, which can either assert its will unilaterally upon the world or withdraw from it, has less relevance to the situation in which America finds itself today than at any time in the past. American unilateralism has become angled, setting off a series of reactions that have come back to where they began. When America has stimulated her economy while other nations opt for restraint, she has summoned a flood of imports and risked inflation and unemployment. When she has unilaterally raised interest rates, she has ravaged debtor nations and invited a global recession. When she has closed her borders to foreign goods, she has crippled her exporters' efforts to pay back her loans. When she has developed dramatically new and more elaborate defensive systems, she has discovered that the Russians will do whatever necessary to eliminate any American strategic advantage. When she has lent support to any dictator or revolutionary distasteful to the Russians, she has lost whatever moral advantage she possessed in the Third World. Faced with these awkward realities there has been a temptation in America to lash out - to be ever more assertive towards the rest of the world. American politicians increasingly describe international relations as a series of tests of America's "credibility", "determination" or "resolve". The assumption is that either we win or they win.

Britain's shift towards Europe, away from the "special relationship" with America, is understandable in this new context. So, too, are the doubts being expressed in Europe these days about the reliability of America's nuclear umbrella. As the German Christian Democratic leader Kurt Biedenkopf recently declared, "The basic assumption of NATO has become doubtful: that the US is still willing to risk having a nuclear exchange with the Soviets that could mean trading the destruction of Chicago to save Bonn."

Should the Labour Party return to power in Britain, and act on its current policy of doing away with Britain's own nuclear force and removing all American nuclear weapons and bases from British territory and waters, the vicious circle will be complete. For, as this book makes clear, it was in the realm of nuclear weapons that the post-war "special relationship" was in many respects at its most distinctive. But such a change will be only the latest manifestation of the deeper problem. As Britain moves away from America in response to America's having moved away from Britain and her allies, she will be leaving America more alone than she has been at any time over the last half-century. It is a solitude which is as once poignant and dangerous.

Sailing steadily on

John Turner

ROY JENKINS
Baldwin
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It is a remarkable fact that most Conservative Prime Ministers seem to become more agreeable and more admirable as they retreat into the past. The only good Tory PM is a dead one, but very old indeed: one who also has a lot of fun, as Lord Salisbury did. As a Conservative, I am not surprised to find that Mr Heath has already begun to sallow in the public estimation. This is not, as some would argue, simply because the Tory party itself has become nastier, and a party leader who tried to represent his followers will soon become acceptable to later generations than the contemporary leader with whom they are comparing him. The better explanation is that the historical perspective makes it easier to see the difficulties under which these devoted public



servants laboured. Only Churchill and Eden seem destined for a permanent loss of reputation compared with their status as working premiers, while revisionists will even argue that Neville Chamberlain was less than absolutely in the wrong.

And thus it is with Stanley Baldwin. The apotheosis of inter-war complacency, the man whose claim to have invented fudge and mudge is much stronger than that of any member of the Callaghan administration, has grown steadily in stature since his death. His "neatly shaped yet most unusual career", as Roy Jenkins has it, has become a source of inspiration to the survivors of all parties who admire his ability to keep the ship of state sailing steadily on course, without much regard to the condition of the sea, the proximity of rocks and pirates, mutiny in the stokehold or scurvy in the fo'c'sle.

Baldwin succeeded his father as MP for Bewdley in 1908. At the hands of Lloyd George he became Financial Secretary to the Treasury in July 1917 and President of the Board of Trade in July 1921. In October 1922 he did more than any other Cabinet minister to overthrow Lloyd George's Coalition, and succeeded to the Exchequer in Bonar Law's government. To an administration not well-endowed with political talent he defeated "dear" George Curzon to succeed Bonar Law in the premiership in May 1923. The rest of his political career was devoted to keeping out "the Goat" and discouraging any recrudescence at the centre of British politics of the "dynamic force" which in his view so discredited the Coalition. The two comparatively recent efforts at a serious biography, by Keith Middlemas and John Barnes in 1969 and Montgomery Hyde in 1973, have established the portrait of a man whose best claims to pre-eminence are his amillience towards potential opponents (including Labour and the working class), and his sustained success as a party leader against the attacks of colleagues who seemed to think that it was the job of a leader to be a Minister for the most compelling reasons.

structive about the problems facing his party and his country. He has been compared to Salisbury as one of the Conservative leaders who really understood the genius of English conservatism: a refined mixture of hypocrisy and inanity. Jenkins has now turned in an essay of appreciation, "written from a Conservative although not personally unsympathetic standpoint".

This is less a work of scholarship than an exposition of known fact, and less a factual account than a piece of entertainment. Jenkins is now the only senior active politician who can write decently at book length without ghosts and research assistants. Though he lacks the venom of Michael Foot, who is the better essayist, he can sustain an argument for longer and he has a greater command of the cadences of the English language. The book is written for the informed and humanely educated general reader with strong political interests, a person who may no longer exist. There is nothing new in it, because no new sources have been consulted: indeed it is one of those many books which could easily have been written without moving from the library of the Athenaeum. It is only 166 pages long, the balance being made up in potted biographies which are themselves amusingly written and sometimes acute.

The mystery in the book is to discover what Jenkins intends to convey as his own standpoint. The Baldwin of this book is the same old procrastinator, occasionally turning prevaricator, who inhabits the thousand pages of Middlemas and Barnes. It is hard to believe that Jenkins is sympathetic to this figure in the same way as he was sympathetic to Asquith, of whom he has written a much more solid and scholarly biography. Asquith shared many of Baldwin's worst features, but Asquith's career included long stretches of political and administrative competence marked by considerable intellectual acuity. Appreciative Tory opponents noted that Asquith, even when "exhilarated", was more than a match for most of his colleagues and most of their own leaders. But Baldwin sober was manifestly less effective than either Lord Birkenhead or Winston Churchill in their customary euphoria, or Lloyd George at any time. Even Ramsay MacDonald could make him look slow and dowdy, at least in the 1920s. His ministerial career before the premiership was marked by dullness and a particularly crass handling of the War Debt problem. His greatest triumph as a party leader was to beat off the challenge of Empire Free Trade, but a battle between Beaverbrook and almost any former Prime Minister was hardly a contest on equal terms.

The surprise about Baldwin is his capacity to survive, steadily forging a reputation as the Lord Liverpool of our time, presiding over a Cabinet of mediocrities. Roy Jenkins's agreeable essay will contribute something to the survival of Baldwin's reputation, without doing much to explain it.

In *Parliaments and Parliamentarians in Democratic Politics* (255pp. New York: Holmes and Meier. \$37.50; paperback, \$19.95. 0 8419 0942 3) the editor, Ezra N. Suleiman (Professor of Politics at Princeton University) and an international group of political scientists examine the labyrinthine realities of the political process in seven democratic countries - Great Britain, Italy, France, Japan, West Germany, Norway and the United States. On the assumption that the "classical" model of democracy - according to which the nation's elected representatives constitute the centre of the decision-making and legislative process - no longer works, the contributors focus on the growing accountability of elected officials to their political parties, its effect on the changing role of parliament and parliamentarians within the political context in general, and within the party context in particular. Richard Rose writes on "British MPs: More Bark than Bite?"; Giuseppe Di Palma and Maurizio Cotta explore the theme "Cadres, Peasants, and Entrepreneurs: Professional Identities in a Divided Parliament"; Suleiman contributes a chapter on parliament and parliamentarians in Japan; Klaus von Beyme looks at the role of deputies in West Germany; Per Laegreid and Johan P. Olsen analyse the Norwegian Storting and Thomas E. Mann discusses the United States Congress. The book is a valuable contribution to the study of democratic politics.

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I have brought my father things to read, *Pix*, *Post*, *People*, and I tell him how *magazine*

is like the word for shop in French. I have just started high school, I am learning a language.

My father lifts his striped pyjama top so I can see what looks like the map of Africa

where the doctor has traced the shape of his liver for the third-year students.

At the end of the ward men are listening to the races and from the next-door bed

the man with one leg, the bloke my father says might have to lose the other,

leans across to tell my father something about the second leg at Trentham.

BILL MANHIRE

A nun of art

Anita Brookner

JOANNA RICHARDSON
Judith Gailer: Abiography
312pp. Quartet. £14.95.
0704324830

Julith Gautier was exceedingly famous in her own day and is completely forgotten in ours. She would have been famous, had she not written a fine, for being the daughter of Théophile, the poet, impeccable, with his Merovingian hair style and conquistador's garments. She would have been famous as the offspring of a famous irregular even by modern standards, for Ernesta Grisi, was Gautier's

her second choice of partner, since her remarkable comraded of Ernesta's sister, Carlotta, with whom he often sought refuge; he married neither of them. Sudib would have been more justifiably famous as a great beauty; countless admirers, and even the brothers Goncourt, were to speak of her black eyes, her matte white skin and her Hindu profile. She might even have been famous as one of Victor Hugo's last passions; she would certainly have been famous for her Platonic association with Wagner. But she was most famous of all for her stories, fables of the mythic East, which she wrote with disconcerting fluency and unashamed idealism throughout her life, although the never set foot outside Europe and indeed hardly travelled at all except for visits to Brussels and various German towns, and of course to Tribschen and to Wahnfried, to visit Wagner. I attend the first nights of his operas.

What made her Orientalism so strange — and on the strength of her stories it is hardly believable — was that she was a scholar: she spoke and wrote Chinese, surrounded herself with Chinese and Japanese artefacts, and was convinced, on the grounds of affinity alone, that she had been born in the wrong country. In later life she wore kimonos, corresponded with the Emperor of Annam, and kept a menagerie of snakes, lizards, cats and tortoises in her lacquer apartment in the rue Washington. It would have been singular even if she had been famous, but she was also widely read

her own lifetime, and as the Hindu pur-
survived the ravages of age, and as she
well-meaning if indolent, many young
flocked to her door and news of her contin-
to circulate. She became the first woman mem-
ber of the jury at the Académie Goncourt
continued to write, although not to bestial-
self as she had once done, until her death
1900 in the small villa she had had built
Britanny, near Dinard. Her companion
and was not one of her previously ac-
admirers, all of whom had predeceased
but a gauche young woman of Alsatian
ground, Suzanne Meyer-Zundel. The
woman wrote poetry to each other and
eventually buried in the same grave.

As is the case with most famous beauties of the nineteenth century, it is extremely difficult to discern the lineaments of desire in the silent bodies and heavily jeweled faces that appear in the photographs of the time. Abundant hair, rigid busts hoisted to collar-height, confident jawlines and bulging necks—each head rested poetically on the hand or inclined on the middle distance, dressed as a gypsy king, perhaps in an elaborate disguise his unceasing labour as a jobbing actor—looks grimy and theatrical. Hugo, while being climbing to meet his bride, might be a sea captain (the crest on his hat was made in his lifetime) or the retired

tor of an improved kind of sulphur
 rather than the authentic spirit of
 passion in love and politics. Catullus
 Judith's disappointing husband, was
 his day for his seductiveness, his bias
 then, his single écarlate beauty; in the
 Democritus engraving which Joann
 son reproduces, he looks started in
 Only Wagner, stands up to physics
 largely, one suddenly, because b
 thin. Judith herself rapidly becom
 tainous and was more or less aban
 loose flowing. Of other's garbme
 painted her standing beside her
 cream taffeta petticoat; it is possi
 the slightly thickened features of
 the noble decorated collar the
 therefore highly fashionable d

dently he was associated with the founder, and he did design its emblem (he was a talented draughtsman). This shows a crossed sickle and sword, and Gedun evidently hoped that a revived Tibet would recover its ancient military glory.

In February 1946, the founder of the party ordered, perhaps rather optimistically, 4,000 application forms and 2,000 membership cards (was it expected that half the applicants would have to be turned down?) from a Calcutta firm of printers rejoicing in the Dickensian name of Thacker and Spink. The printers promptly notified the authorities of this scheme for subversion north of the Himalayas, and the information eventually reached Hugh Richardson, the British representative in Lhasa; possibly through him, it also reached the Tibetan authorities. The contact between lama and Roenich, a Russian no less, albeit a White one, was duly noted. Evidently, those Russkies were at it once again. Having failed in their scheming through Dorjiev, they were now trying it on through the beggar-pilgrim of Amdo?

Gedun himself was back in Lhasa by his arrest. The eventual consequence was his arrest and maltreatment. There appear to have been attempts to exculpate Richardson, who wrote an article rebutting accusations of British involvement, but Stoddard affirms that he played a part. In any case, Gedun was imprisoned, eventually released, and died in obscure circumstances shortly after the arrival of the

History, confusingly so-called, since, unlike the other indigenous history of the Mongols, the *Golden Book*, it was not secret. But our favourite old source of information on the Mongols, the *Yasa*, an alleged code of law promulgated by Chingis Khan and his successors, vanishes altogether under Morgan's scrutiny.

Neither the old nor the new sources, however, really shed sufficient light on the big controversies in Mongol history. First, there is the question of numbers. How numerous were the Mongol armies? Morgin's judgment is doubtful. He doubts that a Mongol army of 800,000 Mongols passed through Khorasso in 1219, since, Mongol logistics being what they were, this implies the concomitant passage of 4 million horses and 24 million sheep and goats. Secondly, how destructive were the Mongol

Some historians have mischievously suggested that reports of millions of deaths and the breakdown of settled society in the Near East have been much exaggerated. Morgan does not think so, though he is inclined to attribute more to the nomads' neglect of irrigation works than to their penchant for fire and sword. Thirdly, what was the rule of success in the Mongol imperial family, and how has that part did disputes over the succession and the intrigues of the court, and the role of the eunuchs play in determining the flow and ebb of their empire? All these ponderous questions are handled by the author with style and common sense. Gibbon observes that the Mongol invasions "from their uncommon magnitude will interest a philosopher in the history of blood". It is the spirit of Gibbon which pervades *The Mongols*.

One issue that is not controversial, which gets only a passing mention in Morgan's book, is the status and role of women in Angolan society. But it should be controversial because of modern scholarship's neglect of this area, most curious, particularly when one considers the disapproving interest shown to the subject

by medieval Christian and Muslim observers the Môngols. If, as has often been stated, Mongol army was the Moogol people or "move", where were the women? Did the troops of the general, Subudai, in their years campaigning through Russia and Hungary bring with them not only a string of horses, but also their wives? If they did, were the women left behind in the slaveland heartlands to run things more or less as pleased? And if the woman did accompany armies on their epic campaigns, did they take part in campaigns, but the question certainly deserves further examination. At present we have the history of only the Mongol people.

Anita Brookner

man who exerted such a spell over men of letters, young and old, whatever her own private inclinations might have been, and who arrived her early fame with her reputation for goodness intact and even enhanced by her lazy and impassive hospitality, or perhaps simply by the fact that she could, at the end, be compared with no one but her own illustrious father. For she was Gautier's daughter to the last, despite her Oriental imaginings, and she earns her place in literature as a late Parnassian, a fervent publicizer and celebrator of *le goût japonais*, a forerunner of Pierre Loti and Pierre Louys, both of whom she knew when they were young and she was old, and possibly the biggest incarnation of that laughsing sexless ardour that can also be discerned in Huysmans and Gustave Moreau, and which may be the true decadence.

Yet she herself remained an innocent, at least on paper. When she converted, at the end of her life, into an animal-loving solitary who had renounced human passion, she may not have been entirely honest with her public. There is little evidence to suggest that she had ever valued the love of men or that she had ever estimated it correctly. Her marriage with Cabule Mendes filled her with disgust, not without justification, for he was famously dissolute, and managed to father five children with another bulldog-jawed beauty, Auguste Holmes, three of them while he was still married. Judith Gautier may or may not have responded to Hugo, who, at the age of seventy, was still on manoeuvres: their common language is so inflated that it is difficult to gauge exactly what was happening. This mystical language is even rather worrying, for it overshadows the bounds of taste at every turn, and it is so that, in her innocence, Judith was the victim, that offender. She wrote to Wagner, after meeting him at Tribsenchen for the first time, "It is a pleasure to have reached the felicity of Parsifal."

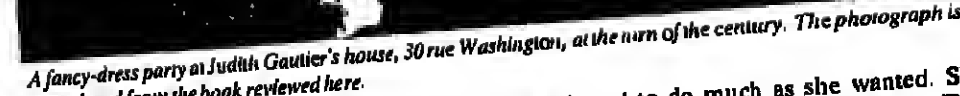
now that I understand the meaning of the phrase, which is so extolled by the faithful: "A young man seeing God face to face." A young man, indeed, for bathing at Fécamp was compared with Archangel Michael and so addressed in a letter which she wrote to celebrate his beauty. Mme Meyer-Zundel likened to the Virgin Mary on the strength of having sent a letter to the Pope in Washington.

But for the full performed essence of language it is necessary to consult her prose and poetry. She was in the entire nascent habit of transcribing poems from Chinese and the Japanese, and these currencies since the first appearance of *Jade in 1867*. Her fables, like *Pe Clums*, Japan, India, Palestine, *Pe Ancient Egypt*, are informed by a simplicity and a muted sensuality we can find in certain extent, were shared by others, but which triumph in Judith Gautier of the whole-heartedness with which she employed. Who today reads *Like Dragon Imperial*? And who can times when knights were bold, as the *Vieux de la Montagne*, a story of Palestine, and maidens noble? Whom these idylls, which seem to issue from girlhood as much as from the pen of a working writer, is more than a working impact lost with the years it the 1870s from the 1980s?

And yet this prose is not negligible; it should be anthologized, rather than to remain embedded in fantasy, the strength of the informing fantasy its power. An example, from *Le Prince à la tête saignante*; with peculiar resonance of her style, a seductive quality:

De l'autre côté de l'étang un fragrant
lissement, s'épanouit : aux branches
des fleurs, de perilles fleurs jaunes
adorable parfum : papillons tout un p
d'insectes et de papillons tout un p
branches seules, avec quel tumult
lisse gorgent, se agitent, s'afloie
ou palpitent : des gouttes d'or, de
flamme, passionnément, fonder
embuée, les baisent, les mordent
meilleuse, pétrissent l'air se sent
amer : par moments l'arbre sem
jeter ces amantes insatiables, avec u
nouveau, toujours avides, avec u
honneur.

This is not merely an added
bees sipping nectar. These
and heavenly flowers, seen



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هذه في الجمل

attractive enchantment which bound them together in mutual admiration. Wagner's love was of an intense and possibly insane variety, Judith's no less. When Wagner grasped her arm in 1876, she noted, "For me it was as if Christ had suddenly begun to pay court to Mary Magdalen". He performed his letters to her with essence of roses. She was instrumental, with her husband, Catulle Mendès, in popularizing Wagner's works in France, or rather in Paris, and whereas Baudelaire had only had the overture to *Tannhäuser* to inflame his admiration, Mendès and his wife pursued the Master's offerings at every first performance, travelling to Brussels for *Lohengrin* and to Munich for *Die Walküre* and never ceasing in their efforts to keep these works in the forefront of the news in Paris.

What breathes through Judith Gautier's work is a sensual chastity or a chaste sensuality, all the more powerful for its being removed in time and distance from the mundane circumstances of ordinary feelings. And it is extraordinarily powerful. The childlike simplicity of the stories is interspersed with descriptions of exalted physicality, like the one quoted above. But, in these stories, love and death go hand in hand, and consumption is not of this world. Her own consumption is a matter of more than local interest. After a short marriage, a possible liaison with Hugo, a Platonic rapture shared with Wagner, and the admiration of many young men, she found peace at last with a jolly girl from Mulhouse some thirty years her junior. Suzanne Meyer-Zuadé possessed an unusual and indeed unchallenged gift: she was able to fashion lifelike flowers out of bread crumbs, an endowment which earned her the nickname of Mademoiselle Miedepain. She was also rich and of a devoted dis-

position. Her account of their friendship, *Quinze ans auprès de Judith Gautier*, supplements Judith's autobiography, *Le Collier des Jours*, from which most of the matter of this excellent biography is taken. How far things went with Miss Breadcrumbs cannot, of course, be known; when they met, the twenty-two-year-old girl was clumsy and passionate and clearly unfitted for normal life as a woman, but Judith's amorous poems to her may have been part of her general withdrawal from the world of men and into the world of animals, pets, and acolytes. There was, in any event, no scandal surrounding the liaison; indeed Judith Gautier's outstanding gift was her ability to impress herself on public opinion without making the slightest concession in its direction.

It is entirely fitting that towards the end of her life she became monastic, and, when forced to speak, would use words carefully, as if they scarcely interested her. At the same time, anything written – letters, poems, the occasional article – remained wonderfully clear. She was a genuine eccentric, a "nun of art", finally at home in the rue Washington with the lizards and the snakes and the tortoises and the cats, entertaining the Emperor of Annam, dressed like a fortune-teller, feeding her guests on pineapples and locoum and black olives, and quite firm in the belief that she was the reincarnation of a Chinese princess. Joanna Richardson does full justice to a woman who at first sight might not have much claim on the attention. It is to Miss Richardson's credit that one closes her book with a feeling of respect for this unlikely academician, whose independent life entitles her to an honourable place in the pantheon of French women of letters, from George Sand or even Mme de Staël to Colette.

The real and the ribald

D.D.R. Owen

CHARLES MUSCATINE
The Old French Fabliaux
219pp. Yale University Press. £21.50.
0300 035276

With persuasive elegance that evolds jargon or modish psychoanalytic theory, Charles Muscatine tells us a great deal in a relatively short space about the scarcely elegant genre of the fabliaux. His aim is to show that these preponderantly scabrous poems merit serious attention for the evidence they provide to help us fill out the cultural history of medieval France and form a resister view of medieval sensibility in general. He is, however, quite undogmatic, his method more exploratory than assertive; and the resulting study is certainly the best introduction to the genre in English. For the non-specialist, translations are supplied for Old French titles and excerpts (even foreign critics are cited in English), and there is a convenient list of all accepted fabliaux together with editions and translations.

Looking first at the literary background, Muscatine falls back on Le Gentil's remark: "The fabliau has its roots in the real." Medieval realism, though, he sees as running hand in hand with caricature and comedy, whereas the major genres are vehicles for an imaginative idealism. One might mischievously wonder whether the romance's tournaments, roasts peacocks, thrones and courtesies are less "real" than the markets, slides of bacon, box-beds and obscenities of the fabliau, or whether the latter's situations are not more wildly remote from everyday experience, their characters more typed than many in the serious genres. But this would be mere toying with terms in the face of Muscatine's reflective and judicious arguments.

Considering the genre's social background, he rejects as too extreme the theories of bourgeois or courtly origins associated with Bédier and Nykrog. His own more eclectic judgment is backed by a valuable survey of conditions in the thirteenth century, which saw the weakening of the rigid feudal structure, wealth replacing privilege, social mobility and close links between town and country. There

Founding mother

David Coward

OLYMPE DE GOUGES
Oeuvres
Edited by Benoit Groult
238pp. Paris: Mercure de France. 139fr.

Olympe de Gouges was born Marie Gouze at Montauban in 1748, the daughter of a butcher or, as she believed and as seems more than likely, of Le Franc de Pompignan, poet and butt of Voltaire. She was guillotined in 1793. Long since venerated as the founding mother of modern feminism, she proves on inspection to have been far less pretty than she is usually painted. Paradoxically, this selection of her garulous, self-advertising and occasionally acute writings does her no service. Olympe in the wings of history nobly declaiming that "Women have the right to go to the scaffold but not to speak in the Nation's Assemblies" is one thing. Olympe centre-stage, in the limelight she craved, smiting all-comers rather than militant in the cause, is quite another. More inspiring dead than read, she leaps off the page in a blaze of self-importance.

Widowed at eighteen, she removed to Paris, where she acquired a reputation as a *femme galante* which she never lived down. By 1780 or so, she had determined to make her way as a playwright. Never much of a hand with a pen, she claimed to have dictated thirty plays of which ten, she thought, had merit. The Comédie-Française disagreed and rejected her anti-slavery play, *L'Esclavage*, in 1785. She cried persecution, a word which remained in her vocabulary until her death.

By 1788, she had turned her attention to politics and, in all, dictated over forty tracts on

a variety of subjects: the care of the poor, the fate of illegitimate children, the slave-trade, the reform of maternity wards, the hygiene of meat and the need for a voluntary tax (the failing that, a wealth tax) to pay off the national debt and finance her charitable projects. Others, equally hopeful of seeing their reforms written into a constitution and their names into the annals of history, churned out comparable *vies* and *pétitions*, and, like them, Olympe protested when she saw her ideas in the neglect she suffered: denied pensions and honours, her patriotism was all the purer. It was a card she played several times, notably in January 1793, when she threatened to denounce the "incivisme" of a troupe of actors (ie, accuse them of treason) who had refused to stage her latest play, an awful but unquestionably patriotic pageant. Yet there can be no doubting her zeal for the Revolution. She was first a constitutional monarchist before embracing the Girondist cause – and most of the Girondins, the scoundrels said – with a courage verging on folly. She fulminated openly against Robespierre, whom she regarded as an ambition on legs. It was for her politics and not for her feminism that she went to the scaffold.

Her feminism was revolutionary in the most literal sense: now that Frenchmen had thrown off the yoke of tyranny, reason and justice required them to extend their new freedoms to women. But her *Déclaration des Droits de la Femme* (1791) also used strikingly modern arguments to outline a comprehensive programme of reform, which has yet to be fully achieved. Women had connived the inferiority thrust upon them and were their own worst enemies. They would never be free until they demanded what was theirs – equal rights with men, upheld in law, to own property, hold public office, exercise political power, seek employment, determine the rate and distribution of taxes and stand as full partners in marriage. It was an altogether bolder and more radical platform than anything imagined by Mary Wollstonecraft, whose bourgeois-oriented *Vindication* appeared only months later. However, when it is set against her driving personal ambition, it is difficult to avoid thinking that the *Déclaration* was a manifesto dedicated more to the liberation of Olympe de Gouges than to the freeing of all women. Female solidarity had no appeal for her, and, though she participated in a few well-publicized demonstrations, she remained a leader without followers. Still, she only claimed to be right; she never said she was an angel.

Benoit Groult, though, strains hard to put her on a pedestal. She rightly remarks upon Olympe's charisma, which she very plausibly attributes to a gift for passionate phrasing. But her edition scarcely inspires confidence – not because Mme Groult knows so little about the period or because her editorial interventions are discreet to a fault, but because she writes with more than a touch of the party-devotional. Olympe's campaign against slavery is massaged into a very modern feminist concern for black minority rights, for instance, and, more generally, when Groult cannot duck the embarrassment of explaining her heroine's "vanité puérile", she invariably allows only the most sympathetic contemporary witnesses to speak, thereby suggesting that Saint Olympe had no warts at all. Olympe de Gouges appears to have been a ghastly woman, rather as Rousseau was a ghastly man. It does not help to make her seem better than she was. She was right, after all, and that should be enough.

In *La Place de la Madeleine: Writing and Fantasy in Proust* (translated by Carol Matrangola Bové with Paul A. Bové. 165pp. University of Nebraska Press. £16.95. 0 8032 1670 X), the novelist Serge Doubrovsky sets out to overturn previous critical approaches to Proust: "I believe Proust has been, overly aestheticized, essentialized. I would like to return his aggressive thrust to him, to restore his violence." Doubrovsky's readings of Proust are psychoanalytical and, as the title of his book perhaps indicates, his method is to proceed to revelation by means of word-play and association. *Place de la Madeleine* was first published in 1974 and reviewed in the TLS of May 17/18 that year.

Autumn of the Enlightenment

Derek Beales

FRANCO VENTURI
Sottocento riformatore: Volume Four, La caduta dell'Antico Regime, 1776-1789
Part Two: Il patriottismo repubblicano e gli aspetti dell'Est
1965pp. Turin: Einaudi. L. 55,000.
881646646

Physically the fifth, this is nominally Volume Four. Part Two, of Franco Venturi's vast study, "The Reforming Eighteenth Century". The numbering difficulty betrays the fact that the work has grown in scope as well as in scale. Beginning with a volume entirely devoted to the Italian Enlightenment of the mid-century, it has developed into a history of European reform and revolution in the 1770s and 1780s as seen through contemporary Italian eyes. In short, the title of the whole "fourth volume" does, the still wider theme, "the fall of the ancien régime"; and the evidence used in it is often non-Italian.

In Volume Four, Part One, America and the larger states of western Europe were considered. In Part Two the rest of the Continent is dealt with, including at one extreme the Netherlands, northern and southern, at the other both Russia and Turkey – but, curiously, virtually excluding central and southern Italy

and the whole of Germany, even Prussia. As always, Professor Venturi illuminates everything he touches. His fundamental sources are contemporary periodicals, mostly Italian. He gleams from them an extraordinary and enlightening range of information and opinions, though his success in doing so depends on the amazingly broad knowledge of modern historical writing he deploys in selecting and appraising them. But his most fruitful technique is to seize upon some little-known Enlightened figure's career and *oeuvre*, to place them in their context, and then to illustrate from his activities and publications the events and attitudes of a relevant part of Europe. Where possible, it is an Italian that is chosen. Venturi exploits the writings of Carlotonio Pilati and Giovanni Ferri on Holland; Italians' funeral orations on Maria Theresa; the works and correspondence of the Verri brothers on Joseph II, the travelogues of Francesco Grisolini, Domenico Sestini and Lazzaro Spallanzani on, respectively, the Banat, Transylvania and Turkey; and the involvement of Scipione Piattoli in Polish affairs. The next best thing is a work by a non-Italian that was translated, published or well known in Italy. Failing any of these, publications of every provenance in many languages are brought into play, always with an awareness of their European and intellectual significance, so that the reader finds himself looking afresh at familiar personalities like

Rysal, Mirabeau, Turgot, Necker, Linguet, Brissot, Sonnenfels and Grimm, as well as learning the significance of hitherto obscure Swiss, Dutch, German and Russian pamphleteers.

"The political initiative", writes Venturi, "had passed into the hands of Joseph II", whose attempt "to solve from above all the problems that had been emerging in the other lands of Europe... made Vienna the leading centre of this final phase of eighteenth-century reforms which rightly acquired the name 'Josephism'". So the emperor's "great project" (a phrase of Pietro Verri's) takes pride of place in this volume. His reform of the censorship approximated to a "cultural revolution"; his measures of toleration for Protestants and Jews were, to quote a Florentine periodical, "worthy of the enlightened century which we live"; in Verri's words, Joseph's ecclesiastical policies had the support of "virtue, reason and 200,000 brave soldiers"; other writers compared him with Luther; he mitigated serfdom in his eastern territories, and imposed enlightenment and centralization on backward Belenium; his criminal law reforms embodied the spirit of Beccaria. "That he was an efficient and enlightened reformer it is certainly impossible to deny." His cruelty and meanness, apparently so far removed from the generosity and humility of the Enlightenment, arose from his lack of faith in its gradual, autonomous advance.

Like Europe as a whole, he was far away in time from the spring and the high noon of the Enlightenment. He was at work in the autumn, season of harvest but also of fears of coming winter.

Hence, in part, the mixed character of his rule, at once generously liberating and minutely interfering.

His measures provoked open rebellion in Transylvania and Belgium, and overwhelming opposition in Hungary. "Florea's rising [in Transylvania]... turned out to be an episode in the final crisis of the ancien régime, in the years which had seen the American and Dutch Revolutions." Like the Dutch revolt, the Belgian uprising of 1787, though suppressed, "contributed, through their constitutional experiments and aspirations, to accelerate and direct the movement of the fall of the ancien régime".

Venturi's portrait of Joseph II, and his discussion of the emperor's reforms and of his reaction against them, are all both notably sympathetic and penetrating. Much of the material used is new or virtually unknown, many of the author's comments are striking and original. Even so, this section illustrates the limitations that such an immense survey cannot escape. It is odd that the extent of the support Joseph received in Belgium, Hungary and Transylvania does not emerge. It is less surprising that the Church's role is under-

played. The author confessed in the preface to his Volume II that he could not abide certain pious writers of religious history, which he thought far too important a field to be left to the devout. The point can be extended to his coverage of the Reaction as a whole. If he perhaps exaggerates the amount of initial Belgian hostility to the suppressions of monasteries, he fails to bring out the extreme conservatism of the rebels of 1787 who, funded and encouraged by abbots, were explicitly demanding a return to the position of 200 years before. The reactionary lawyer who led the Belgian revolution, Van der Noot, is scarcely discussed, whereas the radical peasant, Horea, receives much attention.

This is a crucial issue, because it shows the weakness of the book's framework, derived as it is from the superannuated thesis of the Atlantic, general or Democratic Revolution. How does one situate, on the one hand, the obscurantism of Belgian rebellion and, on the other, the modernity of Joseph's reforms, in relation to "the fall of the ancien régime"? Is it to be understood that Joseph himself helped to bring it down? Or that the rebels, while trying to uphold the existing order with unexampled archaism, contrived to destroy it? Surely the fact is that the ancien régime actually fell (outside America) only in France – and incidentally not till after the period covered by this volume – and that revolutionary France then destroyed it in some other countries, by invasion, during the wars of 1792-1815. As for Poland, Russia and Turkey, it is hard indeed to fit them into the framework of "the fall of the old régime, 1776-1789".

Fortunately, Venturi does not make much of his title and his general thesis, and often writes as though he had forgotten them. Usually, the reader is left to enjoy the new insights that tumble over one another on page after page. Among the most interesting sections are the re-evaluation of the Genevan and Dutch revolts in the general context of republicanism; a fascinating discussion of the image of Catherine's Russia; and an account of the immediate antecedents of the French Revolution which, by using unfamiliar sources and setting the story against the richer international background already provided, puts a novel complexion on some of the most intensely studied months in history. Venturi's great project may be bursting at the seams, but it fully justifies his own defence of his method:

The reading of the gazettes, letters and lesser writing of these years has confirmed me in the conviction that they always constitute a useful means to understanding the cosmopolitan world of the Enlightenment... even today they are capable of inspiring in present-day historians that lively sense of curiosity which we recognise in so many eighteenth-century documents and which is too often lacking in our own historical writing.

Professor Venturi's curiosity is always exciting.

Cartesian convictions

D. W. D. Owen

ANTONY FLEW
David Hume: Philosopher of moral science
189pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £22.50 (paperback).
£7.95.
0631 132351

Antony Flew's book employs the interesting strategy of discussing Hume in the light of the claim "that almost all his conclusions are, for better or for worse, conditioned and sometimes determined by an interlocking set of Cartesian assumptions". Flew summarizes them as follows:

First comes the assumption that all arguments must be either deductive or defective, since the only sufficient reasons for believing any proposition are (other) propositions which entail it. Second is the notion that we are (all of us) forever imprisoned behind Veils of Appearance, since we can never be immediately aware of any mind-independent reality. Third, and finally, it is argued or assumed that we essentially are incorporal subjects of (only) the limited and ingrown sort of experience allowed for under the second of these three principles.

One of the delights of studying and teaching Hume is that it is almost never appropriate to answer simply yes or no to questions like "Did Hume think that persons are incorporeal?" His position is always more subtle than the traditional categories. His attitude towards all three Cartesian assumptions cannot be accurately described by claiming, simply, that he subscribed to them. For instance, it is difficult to claim that the author of the most devastating critique of the representative theory of perception is committed to thinking, much less assuming, that we are (all of us) forever imprisoned behind Veils of Appearance.

Among the nice features of the book is Flew's claim that there need never have been a debate concerning whether Hume was a naturalist or a sceptic. Clearly he wanted to be both. The interesting question is how, and how far, he succeeded. Flew might have had interesting things to say about this issue, especially with regard to the Cartesian assumptions. Instead, however, we get a perfunctory dismissal, on the grounds of inconsistency, of Hume's attempt to combine scepticism with positive moral science. Flew castigates not only Hume, but those who have been equally complacent about this flagrant and fundamental inconsistency.

In general, Flew's discussion, when he gets down to particular topics such as induction, perception, personal identity etc., tends to be short, aggressive, elusive, and unhelpful. Nothing as elegant as Barry Stroud's division of these topics into the negative and positive phases, which is an interesting way of combin-

ing Hume's scepticism and naturalism, emerges. Little attention is paid to Hume's particular arguments about these subjects, some of which are deservedly among the most famous in the history of philosophy. For instance, Flew admits that the first two Cartesian assumptions support Hume's contention that no philosophical argument can rationally ground our belief in an external world. But he then claims that "the main philosophical profit to be gained from Hume's attempt to explain what causes us to have that belief 'lies in its unadmitted suggestions that and how those convictions themselves should have been challenged'".

Such quotations give some idea of the bad-tempered, bombastic style in which the book is written. But the empty dismissal of many of Hume's more famous arguments or illustrations is even more alarming. Flew purports to be an admirer of Hume (he talks about critical "respectful, affectionate yet always critical study" of Hume) and in some ways he demonstrates a thorough knowledge of and good feel for his writings. Yet, to give another example, he calls Hume's introduction of the "missing shade of blue" case "outrageous", and his response to the case "scandalous". For, notoriously, any universal generalization is decisively falsified by even one single genuine counterexample. Since the missing shade of blue case is one of those important examples that is carried over almost exactly from the *Treatise* to the *Enquiry*, Flew of all people should have considered it more carefully.

Flew himself is capable of providing counterexamples to his own generalizations. In this book, nothing is emphasized more than Hume's commitment to the three Cartesian presuppositions. Yet, when discussing an issue concerning causation, Flew writes that "here, as in his account of our beliefs about the external world, Hume sometimes forgets his Cartesian presuppositions; though the offences are certainly more flagrant and more frequent there." Is this a defence of the attribution of the second Cartesian assumption to Hume?

It is difficult to understand why and for whom this book was written. The dust-jacket claims it to be "an ideal introduction for students of philosophy and of political and social science who are approaching Hume for the first time". But there is too little discussion of Hume's actual arguments for that. More advanced students and Hume scholars will find Flew's methodological points of interest, but these could easily have been covered by an article or two. One hint is given by Flew himself, when describing the many other rather good books recently published about Hume: "several of the more general books have been, potboilers, written simply to fill a large, shaped gap in some series."

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The master of megalomania

Joseph Rykwert

LEON KRIER (Editor)
Albert Speer: Architecture 1932-1942
245pp. Archives d'Architecture Moderne,
Rue Defacqz 14, 1050, Brussels.
287143063

Mir fällt zu Hitler nichts ein — "Nothing occurs to me about Hitler", the opening sentence of Karl Kraus's *Third Walpurgisnacht* came to mind as I looked through *Albert Speer: Architecture 1932-1942*. Kraus never published his anti-Nazi pamphlet, since he thought that it would only endanger his readers' lives — and "brutal force is no subject for polemics, nor insanity a subject for satire". I do not record this to make a parade of banal anti-Nazi sentiments, but by way of reflection on what is being done in this book, which is a justification, even a eulogy of Hitler's favourite architect, the "decorator" of his great power masques, the executor of his plans for Berlin and Nürnberg, and his wartime Minister of Munitions. It is not about Speer's almost unlimited power as an organizer, but about his achievement as an architect which is presented as quite divorced from any moral or political overtones.

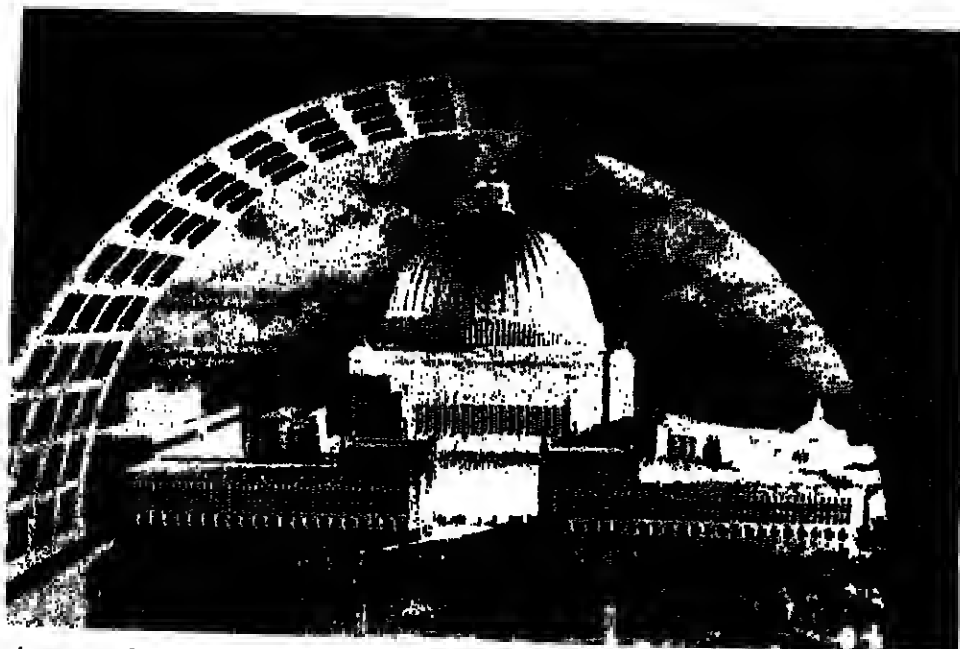
Speer (it is here contended) was a "classical" architect. I am not quite sure what the word means, except that it suggests the use of antique-type columns and mouldings; though a category which has to include (soy) Ictinus who designed the Parthenon, the twelfth-century Benedetto Antelami of Parma, Alberti, Borromini and Speer does not seem of any use for any sane purpose. The authors of this book further contend that whatever it is, classical architecture obeys an internal logic, and has no reference to outside values or any historical context. Unlike "modernism", which claimed to express "the spirit of the age" or "function", "classical" architecture is wholly abstract, and may therefore be equally applicable to Stalin's and to Hitler's despotism, or even to the "decadent" capitalism of the United States — since Speer was a contemporary of Zhdanovskii and Iofan as well as of John Russell Pope, architect of the National Gallery in Washington, of the Jefferson monument there — and incidentally of the "Georgian" American Embassy buildings in Grosvenor Square in London. Apart from appropriating antique features, it is not at all clear how such a logic (method) might have been a more helpful word) operates.

However, the book has a hidden, or at any rate an implicit agenda, which is more interesting than what it purports to present. The name of the publisher provides an indication: the Archives d'Architecture Moderne in Brussels is an admirable enterprise, a cross between a national drawings collection, a research institute and a publishing house, and owes its being and nature to the zany genius of Maurice Culot: a historian, polemicist, *gauchiste* politician and community agitator, he has now been seconded to the Institut Français d'Architecture and is therefore an influential figure, with whose blessing the book appears. Culot and Leon Krier (a Luxemburger who has lived in London for some years) have collaborated for a decade or more; they have both professed their passionate belief in the integrity of the historic (that is, pre-industrial nineteenth century) urban texture, the value of the craftsman and retail trader in the city, of "traditional" materials (wood, stone, brick), and small-scale farming as well as their distaste of the high-rise, "zoned", modern town. Ruskin, Morris and Kropotkin were invoked by Krier as culture heroes; Culot has made much of the infamous Kaganovich report, which defended the existing Soviet cities against avant-garde planners, and ushered in the era of socialist realism in Soviet architecture. In the battle against Modernism, Speer is being proposed by Krier and Culot as the guide who will lead us out of our perplexed age into a new classicism.

The book has a relatively brief text, in French and English; a proface written by Albert Speer himself, an attractive, spirited, aggressive essay on the "Architecture of Desire" by Krier, and a poker-faced account of "Classicism in the Twentieth Century" by Lars Oluf Larsson, the Swedish historian who has already produced a separate account of Speer's

Berlin project. It will certainly circulate freely and influentially through schools of architecture in several countries (though perhaps not in Germany) and therefore requires notice.

Krier has long been an admirer of Albert Speer, who died in 1981 in his mid-seventies on a visit to London to promote one of his publications. Speer was still under thirty when he rose to fame and power. He had been the teaching assistant of Heinrich Tessenow, a steadfast proponent of the principles of sobriety, order, craftsmanship, traditional materials and decentralization at the Berlin Academy. Although his class tended to attract the Nazi students (while his equally famous "Expressionist" colleague Hans Poelzig attracted the Communists), Tessenow was so hostile to the Nazis that Speer could not confess to him that he had joined the party in 1931. Yet within months of joining, Speer would become Hitler's everyday architectural interlocutor. He was to build the Party rally ground at Nürnberg (as part of a vast layout which was to include Hitler's mausoleum), the ominous chancellery building in which Hitler died, and draw up a plan for a truly megalomaniac scheme for the



A maquette of the unbuilt Berlin Triumphal Arch. It is reproduced here from the book reviewed on this page. Speer did not claim to have designed it but rather to have translated it from sketches and measured drawings executed by Hitler in 1925. A version of this model was presented by Speer to Hitler on his fiftieth birthday. The semi-circular arch was to span eighty-seven metres, and the triumphal, which would have complemented the distant dome, would have carried a 140 by thirty metre colonnaded square, 100 metres above the avenue below.

enlargement of Berlin, of which that chancellery was to be a fragment.

At first Speer worked in association with the much older Ludwig Troost (Hitler's architectural mentor), the designer of the Party headquarters in Munich, and of the House of German Art there. When Troost died in 1934, Hitler toyed with the idea of taking over the office himself; he was a passionate if frustrated architect, and unlike the other dictators of his era could and did read plans. He therefore breathed down his architect's neck much of the time — and even designed some of the "Eagle's Nest" at Berchtesgaden as well as the never-to-be-built Berlin Triumphal Arch (on the scale of the Eiffel Tower rather than of the Parisian Arc de Triomphe), also the first project for the vast central hall which Speer was to transform into a dome for sheltering 180,000 (standing) Party members. Building virtually stopped in 1940, but not the designing; Speer went on discussing these (and other architectural) projects with his Führer even in the last dark days before the bunker suicide. As a thirty-year-old beginner handed the largest commission in the world's building history, he was overwhelmed and remained grateful.

At forty Speer was one of the accused at the Nürnberg trials, and was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment; spent mostly at Spandau, where he wrote the diary which granted him a second career on his release. That diary and his memoirs (some 1,200 pages in all) have been several languages: they make fascinating reading, besides being the most trustworthy account of the workings of Hitler's immediate entourage. Speer admired Hitler intensely, was wholly fascinated by him, yet he was the only one of the Nazi elite who expressed public repentance for the misdeeds of the régime and

did not question the justice of some Nürnberg retribution.

The authors of the book make a brief disclaimer on the half-title which they seem to think quite sufficient to cleanse the publication of any political taint. "Classical architecture and the passion for building", they say, "are its sole subject, and its sole justification." Yet Speer himself contradicts them in the opening sentences of his preface: "My buildings were not solely intended to express the essence of the National-Socialist movement. They were an integral part of that movement." And he exonerates his designs by a Goethean epigraph: "as long as it lasts, delusion holds invincible truth". Inevitably, however repentant politically, he felt that by forswearing his architectural achievement he would be doing violence to himself.

Later in his preface he, too, makes a distinction: his buildings represented the politics of the Nazi Party in their scale, but could not represent its ideology. Surely it should be the other way round: they represent only its ideology, not its politics? Neither Speer nor his co-authors enlarge on this proposition; the reader is to examine the Speer drawings for

ice". Tessenow said: "Do you think you have really accomplished something? It is enough for me to think that I have lived." It is to be credited that he quotes his teacher's epigram in his memoirs. Tessenow had meanwhile been dismissed from his teaching post, and although Speer's instance) he was restored to rank and salary, he was retired. He steadfastly refused to have anything to do with the Nazis and his big buildings, and did not return to the professional world until 1945, when he was "discovered" by the Russians. His writings are still unknown in France and Britain.

Krier protests at the blindness of the 1930s victors, Napoleon's enemies continued to respect his architects, Percier and Fontaine, after defeating him; and Walter Rathenau, one of Wilhelmine Germany's most important industrialists, was made Minister of Reconstruction after the defeat of 1918. Speer, on the other hand, was locked up. In his memoirs Speer explains it to himself: there was a qualitative difference between Napoleon's and Hitler's régimes on the one hand, and Hitler's on the other. The truism only has to be stated because the authors of the book seem unaware of it, as they are unaware of the difference between the involvement of technicians and that of artists, and architects in particular. Speer himself seems unwilling to draw the further conclusion that his buildings cannot be seen as abstract propositions, since whether ideological only or political only their aim, their design was to publish and broadcast the grandeur of the *Tausendjährige Reich*, and they cannot be "read" in any other way. For Leon Krier, they have even less to do with Ruskin, Morris, Kropotkin and his other culture heroes than Ricardo Bofill's present concrete pseudo-antique colossi in the Parisian suburbs.

Architecture cannot transcend its context completely. Nor are the rules of architecture ever quite free of history. Yet even in the matter of mathematical proportion (which is the closest such rules get to being "transcendental") Krier seems unaware of what is involved: since he publishes diagrammatic elevations of the Great Hall and the Chancellery with any number of different-sized squares (from 1 to 7, with equilateral triangles and golden sections) applied to them without any sense of how such regulating lines should be relating one part of the building to another, or any sense that there are traditional (if not transcendent) rules of thumb about their harmony or discord. It is something that Tessenow, as a pupil of the Thiersch brothers, would have found familiar. Peter Behrens used proportions in a very accomplished way, and certainly taught Corbusier much about it. Any examination of the drawings and photographs in this book will show the careful reader that Speer had no mastery of the skills which were associated with nineteenth-century academic design: just another cult-figure for some old-fashioned muscologist camp.

Yet there is nothing camp about this book. It is not even offered as another ingredient for the post-modernist brew, but as the true and only way to a new architecture. Shock tactics is what this book may really be about. It is an attempt, by using the abrasive and attention-focusing figure of Speer (Tessenow, or the less familiar but admirable de Finetti would have made better exemplars on grounds of common ideology and architectural ability), to propagate two separate and equally pernicious ideas: the first is that there is a timeless correct "classical" architecture which has been tainted by association with tyranny, but which can now be rescued by being devalued wholly abstract. Second, and I think contradictorily, that this architecture is the acceptable face of craftsmanship, *petit-bourgeois* living in smaller things, to which we must all return as soon as possible and that Albert Speer provides the example of how this might be achieved.

As will be clear, I do not accept either of the propositions separately or together. The real problems of architecture are about other things. Still, whatever I write here will have no effect on the students of architecture in the United States, in France, Italy, Spain, yes, and Latin America who will not read the texts in this book, but will certainly copy the plates. I am afraid that we will find grim echoes of it in Third World housing estates in about five to ten years' time.

Botanical bickerings

Desmond King-Hele

DAVID ELLISTON ALLEN
The Botanists: A history of the Botanical Society of the British Isles through a hundred and fifty years
230pp. Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies.
096953562

This is a book that might have been as dull as ditchwater: its essence is caught in a splendid photograph (from 1931) of a venerable gentleman in a city suit with wing collar, standing by a stretch of ditchwater and keenly examining a specimen of Loddon pondweed. But there is nothing stagnant about David Allen's lively story of the Botanical Society of the British Isles and its predecessors. Polonius had the right word for it: "tragic-comical-historical-pastoral".

The story begins with the founding of the Botanical Society of London in 1836. There was strong popular interest in botany in Britain during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, generated by Linnaeus and exemplified in the creation of the Linnean Society, the many textbooks on botany, the great literary success of Erasmus Darwin's *Loves of the Plants* and the artistic triumphs of Thomson's *Temple of Flora*. Enthusiasm waned in the early years of the nineteenth century, but began to revive in the 1830s. As the Linnean Society was committed to the furtherance of the Linnean system, there was room for an easy-going Society to cater for collectors as well as scientific botanists. Even before the Botanical Society of London began, a tragic-comic element crept in, because the Botanical Society of Edinburgh was formed five months earlier and inevitably stole many potential members. Still, the Botanical Society of London did succeed in being born, and it survived for twenty years. Its leading spirit was H. C. Watson, who was very active in organizing exchanges of plants among members. Not all members paid their subscriptions, however, and it was deemed ungentlemanly to herry them: this was probably at the root of the Society's financial collapse in 1856.

The plant exchanges were kept up by J. G. Baker at Thirsk, with his "Botanical Exchange Club", until a disastrous fire in 1864 destroyed his premises and all his possessions, including thousands of plant specimens. Out of the ashes arose a new Botanical Exchange Club in 1866 and, despite sporadic quarrels, this Club was still going strong in 1915 under the dictatorial

rule of G. C. Druce, its "Secretary". Druce's death proved to be another disaster: the Club, or Society as it was often called, found itself in a real mess, because nearly all its belongings were in Druce's house and its money in his personal bank account. Struggles with the executors lasted until 1939, when the war intervened, and brought further disaster, for the Treasurer was killed and all the records destroyed during the London bombing in 1941. Even so, the organization was kept going until after the war.

Now at last we meet the Botanical Society of the British Isles, formed as a fresh start in 1948. Quite soon the Society began its pioneering work in mapping species on 10-km squares of the National Grid. About 1½ million records were accumulated, and the *Atlas of the British Flora* published in 1962 has served as the model for many subsequent surveys.

To these bare branches of narrative Allen adds some pleasing foliage — his deft assessments of the social background and personal motives of the early members. Rarely censorious, he relies more on wry humour; and there is also much to applaud. For example, members of more hidebound Societies may be surprised to know that the Botanical Society of London admitted women from the outset. This liberality probably filtered through from the late eighteenth century, when the idea of ladies botanizing was generally accepted — though not by the Revd Richard Polwhele, who in his poem "The Unsex'd Females" (1797) was worried that girls studying a plant might "dissect its organ of unallow'd lust".

Allen has made a list of about 400 members of the Botanical Society of London, each (whenever possible) with profession, dates of birth and death, and place of residence. The list is fascinating in its diversity. There were not many professional botanists in Britain and they formed only 6 per cent of the total membership. The medical men were the largest group (20 per cent), closely followed at 15 per cent by the "independents", including men with private incomes and most of the ladies (who made up 8 per cent of the total). Of remaining 59 per cent form a microcosm of (fairly) polite Victorian society, including booksellers, chemists, clergymen, engineers, gardeners, lawyers, a nail-maker and an umbrella-repairer.

Does the petty hickering of past botanists deserve to be recorded in such detail? Yes, when the task is so well done: Allen has put the Society on the map as effectively as the Society put the species on the map, nearly thirty years ago.

The Rememberers

They whisper war:
When Coventry went up and the Brum horizon
Was a southern borealis of saffron fire —
That midnight dawn;

Or else the haystack
Somewhere in Hertfordshire, one sleep's distance
From the hush of doodlebugs and yet they woke
Seething ants.

Not history yet.
These memories have a life eluding time
Now in this Summer garden where we sit
Rehearsing them.

A child shouts
Unseen among azalea galaxies;
All through the air a yellow gossamer floats
Spooled by breeze.

Perhaps the past was
Always this far away, always this close:
On deckchairs frothing sheets of yesterday's news
The rememberers doze.

Let night fall:
Then let me, leaving, glimpse behind the car
Two streams of light converge on a black hole
Or unborn star.

W. H. AUDEN

Mixing mechanisms

Rosa Beddington

LYNN MARGULIS and DORION SAGAN
Origins of Sex: Three billion years of genetic recombination
258pp. Yale University Press. £30.
0300333400

According to Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, this book is written for those "who do not yet belong to an already entrenched, restricting thought community". Presumably they anticipate that the old school may not like it. The old school they have in mind consists of those population geneticists and sociobiologists who maintain that sex is a good thing because it generates variation and this is a blessing in a harsh, competitive world governed by natural selection. Margulis and Sagan have a rather different view of the benefits, or otherwise, of sex. They believe it to be a necessary adjunct for increasing specialization and the development of different cell types. Far from being maintained to ensure variation, the reason it is still with us is that it is an insurance against too much variation.

"Sex", in this case, refers neither to gender nor to the act of reproduction. It is simply the mixing of genes from two different sources, either within an individual or between individuals. The most primitive form of sex is genetic recombination in bacteria, which is never involved in reproduction. However, the basic mechanisms for incorporating new genes, or DNA, into bacteria, are essentially the same as those used by higher organisms to mix their genes. That such mixing mechanisms exist is probably a legacy from the days when there was little oxygen on earth and, consequently, no ozone layer to protect the genes of micro-organisms from the damaging effects of ultraviolet light: the authors argue that it was the evolution of enzyme systems to repair DNA that laid the foundations for sexual interchanges involving the acquisition and shuffling of genes. But although this may explain why sex is possible, the question why it is still here is another matter.

One of the basic tenets of Margulis's thesis is that the greatest division in the living world is not between plants and animals but between prokaryotes (cells, such as bacteria, in which the genes are not packaged into a membrane-bound nucleus) and eukaryotes (unicellular and multicellular organisms, such as plants and animals, in which they are). An extensive study and knowledge of those micro-organisms, of almost infinite design, which bridge the gap between prokaryotes and eukaryotes, has led Margulis to an imaginative vision of the evolution of eukaryotes. This microscopic world provides living, morphological and molecular evidence for her idea that higher cells are the descendants of symbiotic unions between different microbes which subsequently co-evolved as wholly integrated communities. That is to say that various functions of a eukaryotic cell, such as respiration, motility or photosynthesis, were originally subserved by different bacteria which had invaded or been eaten by larger prokaryotes but, instead of being digested, became permanent beneficial residents within their hosts. Margulis's explanation for the origins of eukaryotic sex follows a similar vein. Essentially, cannibalism combined with indigestion resulted in cells with double the normal number of genes (diploidy). Under certain circumstances this might be advantageous; but other conditions might favour those cells which had managed to divide in two again, thereby reverting to a single copy of the genome (haploidy), and so alternation between haploidy and diploidy might persist under alternating conditions. This may be a plausible description of the earliest eukaryotic sex, but it does not better previous attempts, dismissed by the authors as

bogus arguments for the natural selection of sex, in explaining what it was about sex that assured its immediate survival.

Margulis and Sagan have made an interesting attempt to untangle the fundamental problems posed by the origins of sex. However, although they describe their exercise as a detective story, few thriller plots would survive a background of such mechanical detail. For those already familiar with cell and molecular biology the introductory chapters are repetitive, somewhat superficial and at times plain dull. For those who are not, the starkly presented basic science will hardly be engaging. None the less, the book has one great strength — its comprehensive survey of the fascinating vagaries of sex throughout the living world, and in particular among the most primitive of eukaryotic ancestors. The old school, among others, may find some of the reasoning unpalatable, but even flawed arguments can provide new perspectives.

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COMMENTARY

A light foreshadowing

Jonathan Keates

FELIX MENDELSSOHN
Camacho's Wedding
Oxford Playhouse

Mendelssohn once shocked a group of his more serious-minded English admirers, who were piously damning Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* for its triviality, by saying: "It's charming, so charming that I wish I'd written it myself." He might have learnt a good deal from Donizetti about the most effective uses of music for the purposes of drama, and it seems a pity in any case that as a mature composer he never completed an opera. Pieces like *Elijah* and *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* suggest that this would scarcely have been beyond his imaginative reach.

What does survive is a handful of family entertainments written for musical evenings in Berlin (including *Die beiden Neffen* and *Der Onkel aus Boston*) and a full-length *Singpiel, Camacho's Wedding*, which the sixteen-year-old composer completed a few weeks before his monumental string octet *Opus 20*. Produced at the Berlin Schauspielhaus in 1827, the work was a failure, and subsequent neglect has only now been remedied by Oxford University Opera's enterprising revival, based on a reconstruction by Clive Brown and John Warrack of the score and libretto.

Reasons for the work's theatrical demise are all too readily appreciated. Friedrich Voigt's text, based on the Cave of Montesinos episode in *Don Quixote*, has a sort of heavy charm, without showing much impulse towards character development or contrast, or grasp of the mechanics of dramatic situation. The music seldom manages to overcome such disadvan-

tages. Pace the claims made in the programme for the influences of Spohr and Weber, these are striking by their absence. The elfin horns of German folklore make themselves heard periodically and the heroine Quiteria is realized for us with an unabashed romanticism, but much of the score is strung together from rigid eight-bar opera buffa formulas with little to foreshadow the lyricism or lightness of touch which characterize the essential Mendelssohn.

We needed, nevertheless, to hear this piece as part of the current process of Mendelssohn's rehabilitation: though *Camacho's Wedding* is unlikely to join the string quartets or the *lieder* in a return to popular favour, its significance as a pointer to a road not taken is unquestionable. Duncan Watt's direction of the four performances was as lively and intelligent as Clive Brown's conducting of the student orchestra, whose sounds were hardly battered by an acid acoustic. On Peter Ruthven Hall's raised set, which had a Japanese feeling, the cast featured an affective Quiteria in Yvonne Barclay and a well-matched Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in David Guest and Philip Judge.

The second Irish Festival, "Siamsa Cois Uisce", at Watermans Arts Centre from March 8 to 31, includes the showing of two specially-commissioned, one-act plays: *Mainland* by Daniel Magee and *Ronnie's Doing Well* by Michael McKnight. In addition, the Festival will present productions by the Arc Theatre, the National Folk Theatre of Ireland, and Red Kettle Theatre. There will also be readings and discussions by Desmond Hogan, Paul Durcan, Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon. Further information is available from Watermans Arts Centre, 40 High Street, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 0DS.

Sales of books

H. R. Woudhuysen

January and February were relatively quiet months for the book auction houses with few sales taking place. March looks as though it is going to be busier. On March 5 Phillips had a small general sale with some good atlases and maps. There were three first editions in the sale; among them one with dust-wrapper of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939), estimated at £60-£80. Though not a rare book, this does not often come up at auction. From the same year, the first signed and limited edition of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* was expected to go for as much as £800, while a slightly battered first of P. G. Wodehouse's early book *The Golden Boy* (1904), was estimated at £120-£150. One pleasing association item is worth mentioning: Aubrey Beardsley's copy of A. W. Pollard's *Early Illustrated Books* (1893), was expected to fetch between £60 and £80.

The third and fourth sessions of Sotheby's general sale of books and maps take place on March 9 and 10. The material is again fairly miscellaneous with some unusual early printed books, a further group from the library of Duff and Diana Cooper, a first edition with dust-wrapper of *Lord of the Flies* (estimate £100-£150), and a good collection of items from the Hogarth Press. Especially when they have their original wrappings (some by Vanessa Bell) these are very attractive books, which have begun to attract collectors willing to pay substantial though by no means exorbitant prices for them: by charting its productions, Clive Woolmer's *Checklist of the Hogarth Press* (originally published in 1967 and reissued this year by St Paul's Bibliographies in an enlarged

second edition) has undoubtedly encouraged enthusiasts.

Finally, on March 12 Bloomsbury Book Auctions have an all-day sale which may be of unusual interest. The oddest item in the auction part is a copy of the 1905 first edition of Edgar Wallace's *The Four Just Men* which Crippen read on the Montrose while on his way to Canada. The book was later owned by the captain of the ship, who identified the previous owner, and added that the news that Crippen was reading the book greatly added to his popular success. It is expected to go for between £80-£120. The afternoon part of the sale is devoted to a very curious accumulation of books formerly owned by Eric John Duggan, whose interests extended from psychology to the bibliography of erotic literature. There are few outstanding items, but the collection as a whole contains some oddities which would undoubtedly be very hard to put together again: it may attract some specialist attention from buyers interested in the work.

Pushkin's drawings

David Budgen

Among the recent celebrations in Britain to mark the 150th anniversary of Pushkin's death in 1837 was the showing during February and March, at the National Film Theatre and elsewhere, of an enjoyable and original series of three thirty-minute films. The films *Pushkin's* (The Drawings of Pushkin) show the life and works of the poet - rather in the manner of a vaguely Surrealist East European cartoon - by animating the countless doodles to be found over all his manuscripts. Made with the help of the artist Yankelevsky, the film soundtrack, consisting of a brief narrative and some of Pushkin's verse, is recited by some of the best Soviet actors - Smolotkovsky, Tarky, and Batalin - and accompanied by the music of Schnittke.

As Pushkin's literary executor, the poet Zhukovsky, was to discover when sifting through his papers on his death, Pushkin's manuscripts and rough drafts are a chaotic palimpsest of scratching out, corrections and deletions. Unlike those of Tolstoy or Proust where the clean rough copy is material for further, sometimes epic, insertions, Pushkin's manuscripts with their crossings-out and scribbles are the evidence of his thinking aloud: the creative workshop of an improvisator of genius.

All of them are further enlivened by an extraordinary collection of witty, elegant and, for the most part skilfully drawn, doodles illustrating the progress of the poem. This is at the most strange in a poet who is decidedly un-painterly, only rarely "visual" in the way that Pasternak was. And it is not as if, like *Therese* in his novel, Pushkin uses the image or doodle as a point of departure. Unlike the sketches of Lermontov or Hugo, who are poet-artists in their own right, Pushkin's doodles are extensions of his handwriting, laconic and witty and inseparable from the verse-line.

The idea of animating not only the doodles but the manuscripts as a whole (Pushkin's post-stroke turn into forests and fences; hillsides and rain), is both original and particularly appropriate to the skimming pace and lively nature of the poetry, to its lightness and wit. Although the overall tone of the film is light-hearted (there is great play with Pushkin's drawings of "ladies" feet in what Nabokov termed the "pedal digression" in *Oleg*), the main emphasis is predictably on Pushkin's humiliations at the hands of the Tsar and his minions. This theme provides some of the best passages in the film, where Pushkin and his mischievous, monkey-like *alter ego* are treated like a comic duo in an interview with Nicholas I, who acted as Pushkin's censor. One of the reasons for Pushkin's enduring popularity in the USSR is, no doubt, the lasting topicality of the theme of the artist's humiliations by the authorities.

Edible analogies

David Nokes

DENNIS POTTER
Visitors
BBC2

Visitors is Dennis Potter's holiday film. Released from the dark bristling obsessions of the Forest of Dean into the sunny Umbrian countryside, he offers us, on the surface at least, a complete change of mood and style. Adapted and slimmed down from his stodgy stage-play *Sufficient Carbohydrate*, Potter's screenplay is a comedy of manners with all the verbal polish and symmetrical plotting of a Neil Simon comedy. For Michael Brandon and Glynn Barber, too, the film is a welcome break from the routine shoot-outs and car-chases of *Dempsey and Makepeace*, presenting them for once with a script in which acting is more important than accessories.

With the formulaic predictability of a sitcom of Anglo-American mores, two couples sharing a holiday villa, one British and one American, are deliberately contrasted. John Standing's Jack, middle-aged, English and impotent, the former owner of a long established family business. Michael Brandon is Eddie, an aggressive, athletic American whose company has recently swallowed up Jack's ailing firm. Jack's style and pyjamas are buttoned up tight: he talks in epigrams, flavouring his sentences with gin. By contrast Eddie seems over-dressed in bathing trunks, splashes about the pool like an overgrown college boy, drinks juice and talks slang. Jack's wife Elizabeth (Nicola Pagett) is dark and devout; Eddie's wife Lucy (Glynis Barber) is blonde and trusting. When the anticipated swap of partners occurs it seems to confirm Potter's delight in abandoning his usual mordant style for a pastiche of Noel Coward.

Yet beneath the sunny surface lie more familiar Potter themes. Eddie and Jack are both in the food business, and *Visitors* replaces the mottled skyscrapers of *The Slugging Detective* with a bellyful of moral starch. Potter's

metaphors throughout are resolutely alimentary. Jack's penis is as limp as a sick of airline celery, "the sort that leaks into your Bloody Mary". For Eddie, Italian art cannot compensate for the backwardness of a country in which you actually have to cut the bread. Jack's grandfather sold proper food, but Eddie knows that the profits are all in the additives. As Potter runs through his list of edible analogies like a man ransacking the supermarket shelves, those old obsessions, sin and sex, reappear in the guise of fruit and veg. Humiliated and cuckolded Jack creeps through a field of rotten apples like Blake's vision of Nebuchadnezzar while Eddie's phallic stamens has all the synthetic freshness of one of his company's bananas, specially treated for extra shelf-life. Some of the film's best moments, however, occur when Potter relaxes the working of his digestive tract, for example in a scene in the garden where the two men discuss feminism. "It's all the books they read", says Jack. Meanwhile the women chat in the kitchen like parody housewives in a television advertisement.

The taut exchanges of this stereotyped quartet are filmed in a contrasting style which endeavours to suggest mystery and hallucination rather than social comedy. The director, Piers Haggard, flavours Potter's dietary satire with a cinematic sauce of Hitchcockian menace. The faces of the peasants are blank and ominous; the woods are full of noises; a dead head trails from the back of a Fiat like an accusation. Only gradually do we come to realize that the events of the film are being conveyed to us through the disturbed imagination of the fifth member of the holiday group, that of Clayton, the teenage son of Eddie's first marriage. This narrative device seems a deliberate trick of psychological hocus-pocus. The final wonderful cliché which transforms the whole film into an adolescent fantasy of revenge is an unfortunate and implausible device which undercuts the comedy by seeking to turn it into a metaphysical game. It is as if, even on holiday, Potter cannot relax his vision of Hell's retribution. His *Midsummer Night's Dream* is merely a lucid interval in the nightmare of real life.

COMMENTARY

Calling the shots

Zachary Leader

The Color of Money
Various cinemas

Nobody today can make the screen jump and crackle like Martin Scorsese, not even the comparably kinetic Steven Spielberg. In *The Color of Money* there are moments of pure exhilaration, as astonishing as the most astonishing pool shots. The pool sequences employ techniques similar to the boxing sequences in *Raging Bull* (1980): multiple-speed cinematography, dream-like dissolves, continuous panning and dolly. The constant rush and prow of the camera, the sharp, thunderous sound effects (and a high-powered, at times intrusive, score by Robbie Robertson), the precision and clarity of so many of the images (from the moment the film opens, with a series of super-rapid close-ups), all attest to Scorsese's continuing mastery as a film-maker.

But there are problems with the story. The plot concerns the corruption of a gifted young pool-player (Tom Cruise) and the redemption of his fallen corrupter, the arch-hustler and stakeholder, Fast Eddie Felson (Paul Newman). Vincent, the gifted innocent, so loves the game that he is willing to pay people in order to play it. Though at one time he too loved the game with Vincent's purity, Eddie is disgusted at such behaviour. Pool is no longer a game for him, no longer even about winning, "it's about money". When Eddie finally realizes how far he has fallen, he abandons Vincent (and the 60 per cent commission Vincent earned him), and sets out to redeem himself by becoming the best in the business once more, inevitably challenging his corrupted protégé. The film ends with their showdown at the 9-Ball Classic in Atlantic City.

Two things go wrong with the narrative: Eddie's moment of salvation is fuzzy and confusing, as though Scorsese couldn't be bothered to let it unfold properly; and the last third of the film, in which Eddie takes centre stage, is flat and hackneyed. Vincent's corruption, in which Eddie teaches him the tricks of

the hustler's trade, is itself a cliché. All the familiar ingredients are here: Vince's hating to throw a game (a motif straight out of *Raging Bull*, and *On the Waterfront* and *Champion* before it); the ins and outs of assorted scams and stings; the gathering incredulity of wizened onlookers as Vincent reels in a catch. But Scorsese and the actors take obvious pleasure in fitting these well-worn episodes to the grubby pool-ball milieu. Eddie's comeback, on the other hand, seems to have wandered on to the screen from some recent Paul Newman movie, turning *The Color of Money* into a version of *Absence of Malice* (1981) or *The Verdict* (1982), both of which involve heroic redemptions.

Scorsese claims the film isn't really a sequel, that audiences needn't have seen Newman in Robert Rossio's *The Hustler* (1961) in order to understand what's going on. But this isn't altogether true. Because it remains unclear throughout the film why Eddie left playing in the first place (the skills are all there, twenty-five years later), we're never sure what it is he has to overcome in order to be reborn. The vagueness nags and lends a windy grandiloquence to the movie. Eddie's mortification and redemption are treated in the manner of earlier and more personal Scorsese films, in which a larger religious or metaphysical dimension is implied. But in this context, with Paul Newman staring out at us with blue-eyed determination, it is impossible to take the larger theme seriously.

The Color of Money is the second film Scorsese has made since the collapse in 1984 of his attempts to finance a "Lost Temptation of Christ". When the project collapsed, Scorsese turned to "simpler" and more commercial ventures. *After Hours* (1985), for example, was a marvellous maze or game of a movie with little intrusive message. *The Color of Money* seems to have been made in a similar spirit. But the old obsessions aren't dead, and they pop up here in ways that jar and confuse, turning what might have been a perfectly acceptable commercial enterprise - a well-made star vehicle - into something grander and more ambitious, and in the end less satisfying.

The materials of the modern world

Lynne Cooke

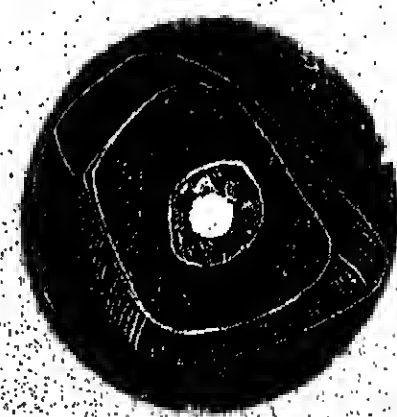
Naum Gabo: Sixty Years of Constructivism
Tate Gallery, until April 20

What makes this current Naum Gabo retrospective at the Tate Gallery so memorable is not only its breadth (over a hundred works plus archival material which usefully demonstrates something of his methods, with models, templates and sketches) but the inclusion of a group of sculptures which have just been "discovered". The result is the fullest account yet available of the work of this artist.

Gabo entitled his first manifesto in 1920 "Realistic Manifesto", and realistic art was his goal for the next fifty years of his career. He argued that twentieth-century modern reality could not be expressed by mimetic styles: "Space and time are the only elements of real life. In order to correspond to life art must therefore refer to these elements." By addressing these notions, Gabo claimed, the artist avoids subjectivism and individuality in favour of "what the collective mind of his time feels and aspires towards, but cannot yet express". Published in Moscow, this aesthetic credo bore the imprint of the fervent debates of artists like Tatlin and Rodchenko concerning the nature of a socially responsible and socially engaged art, as well as showing traces of certain of Gabo's formative experiences, which included a training in medicine, the sciences and engineering, and exposure to vanguard currents in contemporary art in Paris and elsewhere. Essentially self-taught as a sculptor, from the outset Gabo demonstrated the concern to open the mass of the object to space; and to construct the form from the materials of the modern world, notably sheet metal or plastic, as can be seen in this exhibition in "Constructed Head" from 1916, one of his earliest extant



Two wood-engravings from a portfolio of twelve by Naum Gabo, from the exhibition reviewed here.



works. Rapidly finding himself at odds both with the Productivists' belief in working directly with industry, the media and manufacturing, and with the socialist realist art that officialdom began to champion as the accredited mode, Gabo left Russia in 1922, settling first in Germany, then Paris and, later, England before finally moving to the United States in 1946. If these wanderings seem to have impinged little on his aesthetic, which he continued to develop and refine throughout his life, they do reflect the difficulties he faced for years in realizing large-scale works and securing public projects. In the interwar period, proposals for monumental public sculpture gradually replaced those hypothetical schemes for buildings, towers and other types of visionary architecture which he devised along with other artists and architects of the time. Science re-

metal version of "Constructed Torso", of 1917-18, long believed to be lost. Many others have also been reassembled for the first time for this exhibition. The layout of the show cleverly exploits the potential of the Tate's new extension. Although hung chronologically, the exhibition avoids linearity through the use of a series of interconnected spaces which unfold into each other, displaying Gabo's tireless permutation of themes, motifs and forms throughout his career.

In addition to sculpture and related drawings, the show includes a selection of Gabo's prints, his most successful venture into two-dimensional work. In these he extended his language in new but related images which clearly defy three-dimensional execution; at the same time they embody a sensitivity to material and process that the later, large sculpture do not always retain.

The substantial catalogue is a welcome addition to the Gabo literature, for the painstaking work of a number of scholars excises or corrects numerous errors and misconceptions which have long surrounded the sculptor's life and œuvre. In addition to two general essays there is a much-needed biographical study and an invaluable catalogue raisonné of the constructions and sculptures.

Naum Gabo: Monoprints by Graham Williams, with an introduction by Christina Lodder and Marilyn Hammer (72pp. Flon Press, Weaver's Cot, Cot Lane, Biddenden, Kent TN27 8JB. £8. 0 9067 1515 6) has been published to coincide with the exhibition *Naum Gabo: wood-engravings and related graphics*, which is at Kettle's Yard, Castle Street, Cambridge CB3 9AQ from March 7 to April 26. *Naum Gabo: Sixty Years of Constructivism*, edited by Steven Nash and John Merket, is published by Prestel (272pp. Paperback £12.95. 0 960 9622 7).

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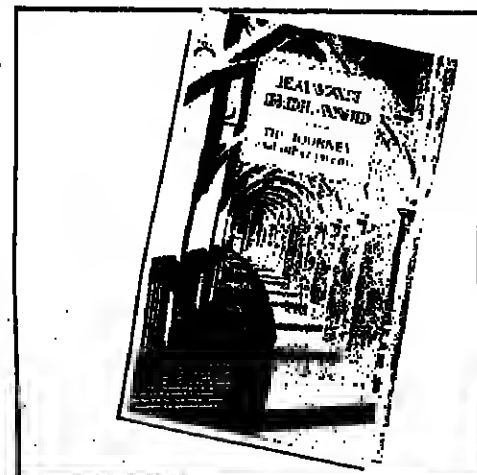
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Image of a Society
139pp. Hogarth. £4.95.
0-7012 0689 6

"Approaching my fortieth birthday", Roy Fuller wrote in his much-anthologized "Translation".

I will stop expressing my belief in the rosy
Future of man, and accept the evidence
Of a couple of wretched wars and innumerable
Abortive revolutions.

"Rosy" suggests the Marxist sympathies of his youth, by renouncing which Fuller seemed to align himself with the ostensibly diminished expectations and reactionary gloom of the Movement, leaving behind the styles and hopes of the Auden generation. Nothing so simple: the poem in fact has a delighted high-mindedness. The publication of a new volume, *Consolations*, together with the reissue of two novels, celebrates the seventy-fifth birthday of this increasingly prolific, increasingly valued poet.

Fuller started playing the old buffer young, and only as he has aged his voice moved towards a thoroughly earned authority, most notably perhaps in *Subsequent to Summer* (1985), where he can write a descriptive piece and end wryly



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Cash in on poetry

The sort of poem old Allen Tate alleged I could write with one hand tied behind my back.

The gift of descriptive phrase-making remains in *Consolations*, still to be rebuked on occasion, as in "Tea-Time":

I see the legs of sparrows plink against
The sun. The usual Coleridgean tone.

Mostly, however, this book is witty rather than visual, a demonstration that Fuller can now write about anything at all with a self-aware duttiness licensed by his affected withering. For instance, in "Currying Favour":

I feed initially suspicious dogs
(Tied up outside the supermarket store)
With "Good Boy" vitaminized chocolate drops.

"Surely" it is not the fear of God's judgment, "Retained from indoctrination when a child" that makes him do this:

Besides, in almost every other way
Old age is famous for its selfishness;
And it may well be, having lost one's looks,
One tries to get in even dogs' good books.

The pleasure this gives comes not just from the way the form is coiled to be sprung, but from the pun which brings back from the margin the fear of what happens after death.

There is an appealing variety—in form, content and length—of poems here. There are several brief squibs, a number of domestic vignettes which are by turns comic and sad, a section of "Tonners" (poems of ten lines) over a wide emotional range, and some dramatic monologues. Of the latter, the most striking is "The Marcellus Version", which laments the printing of *Hamlet* ("the bard's foul papers", "Proliferating fumes / Of the sack-soaked lunatic poet in his study"), because

In Preston or, indeed, the City they'd
Have missed the author's original traffic, yawning
At the colling of his sub-plot.

Loafing through the "folio . . . / By Shakeshaft", the old, disgruntled actor sounds quite philistine until his monologue nears its end:

Bloody cold,
He made it feel on the battlements, admitted.
And by-the-by, even in mid-career
He didn't always get the latus right.
Give me the tome again. Look here, for instance:
"Touching this dreaded slight twice seen of us"
Somehow you've got to stress the 'twice' and 'us'
To bring the sense home; yet speak trippingly.

Fuller gives the character his own prosodic feel, and the apparent pedantry bears thinking about, for the old man may be deaf to variety but he understands the problems of speaking verse.

"To bring the sense home" might be the motto of all three books under review. *The Ruined Boys* (first published in 1959) takes every cliché of the public-school novel and pursues it to its awful, hilarious conclusion. Mr Pemberton, the headmaster, may owe something to Forster's Mr Pembroke, but Gerald Bracher's moral education is the undoing of fairyland by its own axioms. *Image of a Society* (first published in 1956) takes another closed world, the building society, and contrives to be riveting, despite the rather unconvincing central love-affair. Fuller makes the trivia of his own profession fascinating, and his sense of the corrosive power of institutions, their warping of creative instincts, burns through the grimy surface realism. Although the writer-lawyer (like Fuller), Philip Wilt, is a figure of fun, his Marxist analysis of the power-relations that building societies encapsulate suggests that the angry young Fuller never wholly disappeared, and is as true now as then.

That truthfulness is seen also in "Ward IG", the most touching piece in *Consolations*. The poet sets his video-recorder and visits his wife in hospital. "I can die happy, as it were. / Now you've revived the cliché that life would lack // Meaning without you." He comes home across the heath,

And gratitude to enigmatic powers,
Malevolent on the whole, wells up as I
Return to music's marvels, while you lie
Rather too closely still to the realms of Dis.

The restrained passion reminds us that *Consolations* can only be provisional: this is not Fuller's strongest collection, but there is enough here to rescue our gratitude for his

A stowaway in nature

Grevel Lindop

TED HUGHES
Flowers and Insects
With drawings by Leonard Baskin
61pp. Faber. £7.95.
0-571133177

Though its title might seem to invite comparison with Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, Ted Hughes's *Flowers and Insects* is in reality rather a slight production, and it is not strengthened by Leonard Baskin's amiable but lifeless watercolours.

The basic project of the volume—seventeen meditations on the forms, the being and doing of a range of wild plants, insects, birds and spiders—recalls the Hughes of "Pike", "Thrushes" and "View of a Pig". The poems themselves, however, show far less patient attention to their objects than did those early pieces and far more readiness to appropriate them as pretexts for impatient flourishes of coarse-grained rhetoric. Often Hughes seems to be peppering the target, unwilling to sift his images or think through their implications. Honey-suckle flowers, under this régime, become

Hot and tipsy . . . their dark burgundy flushes
Already silted a little
As each one dips their neck through our exclamations,
And opens a gentle hydra
To sip human dreams,
Lips parted, a filament of salmo
Between the tongue and the teeth, a child's eye in a
woman's body.

This little rhuibar dragon,
This viper in the leaves . . .

There is a certain imagistic vitality, but no attempt at concentration or integration.

In the "animal" poems, Hughes's failure to come to terms with the otherness of his subject-matter is indicated by a prevalence of mechanical imagery. As a tern dives, "a triggered magnet / Connects him downward"; a spider's claws are "like the mechanical hands / That manipulate radio-active matter / On the other side of safe screen glass"; the grasshopper is "a wicker contraption, with working parts". Some of these images are apt, but cumulatively they generate a sense of deadness and suggest that the poet is cherishing a subtle dislike of his material.

Hughes's view of his flowers is more dispiriting still. The iris is seen as epitomizing "The womb's temptation and offer", which is defined as

A surrender
Of torn mucous membranes, velvety and purpled,
A translocation of internal organs
In a frisson.

The spindle of meaning

Tim Dooley

JON SILKIN
The Ship's Pasture
93pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £4.95.
0-7102 08413

"I searched / the mind's oceanic magma for congealed / recognizable substance, muck, / for a spindle of meaning." These lines, from "Under a Lamp", give the flavour of Jon Silkin's recent work and suggest some of the problems involved in responding to it. The poems in *The Ship's Pasture*, Silkin's ninth collection, are slippery yet substantial, characterized by sinuous syntax and sinewy diction. They eschew pleasurable local effects in favour of a sustained seriousness, an interrogation of experience that is insistent and cyclical. Exploring the history of the diaspora, life in the shipyards of the North-East or his childhood as an evacuee in Wales, Silkin focuses (in Hopkins's words) on all that "is seared with trade, bleared / smeared with toil; / And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell!" Silkin's language lacks Hopkins's musicality but has a similar clotted and purposeful density.

Amidst this, they labour between
their ridges topped, layered over mosses
of unending mud and drizzle
and sailing trout and salmon, trout and salmon
suffering, desire and the nature of freedom

Turn open,
The core debauched,
All loosely dangling helplessness
Delicately holding herself
As if every edge were cringing round a nerve.

A foxglove is "Flushed, freckled with emerald fever, / Swollen lips parted, her eyes closing, / A lolling armful, and so young! Hot / Among the insane spiders." Himalayan bellam reminds Hughes of "a child bride . . . Over-painted by temple harlots"; a rhododendron is an "excess crumple of lips / shadowed with bloodier darkness, / A cry from deep in the plant, hurting the throat and the mouth helplessly open".

Granted that hunting and reproduction are central to the worlds Hughes is describing, it still seems crudely reductive to impose, so repeatedly, human forms of mechanism and sexual sadism on to them. At times Hughes seems to be free-associating, caring hardly at all for the relevance of his metaphors. Thus some drops are "Waiting to be freed, / As 19th Century vicarage maidens . . . all Cordelias, / Or else all green-veined Gonerils / Under the empty frenzy of hoar-frost". What kind of sensibility is it which slides so aimlessly from the perfunctory stereotype of the "vicarage maidens" to Cordelias and then to Gonerils?

From these strictures, two poems should broadly be exempted. One is "Eclipse", an account of the mating of spiders, which, despite the alienating effect of its somewhat mechanical imagery, does convey a genuine curiosity about the life-form it observes. It also holds back until its last line the revelation that the mating, with its mysterious and perilous balance between male and female, has been taking place on a winduppane during a solar eclipse: a detail which opens up enticing depths of symbolic resonance. The other is "The Honey Bee", which, though it gives no explicit indication, must surely be an elegy for Sylvia Plath, written almost in her own manner (there is a quite specific echo of Plath's "The Bee Meeting" in "Two Tortoiseshell Butterflies" earlier in the volume).

Hughes's honey bee is beautifully, frustratingly self-absorbed and right; she "Can't be taught a thing, / Like the sun, she's on course forever, / As if nothing else at all existed / Except her flowers". Her perception of the world is as "A flying carpet of flowers"—or, perhaps, of potential poems: "a pattern / Coming and going—very loosely woven— / Out of which she works her solutions". The beekeeper (Mun? Death?), with his "gloves of shadow", stickily biots the sun but remains outside her consciousness, "Though he's a stowaway on her carpet of colour-waves / And drinks her suns".

The poignancy, tact and humour of the poem indicate just what is lacking from most of the volume. It is a relief to know that Hughes has not lost his capacity for this kind of writing.

between: came toward pond,
kitchen, gas-making shed, and turned right
to where I waited, blind dutifully in
the weave banded with rain, that stung my thighs
like piss.

Here the difficult movement of the verse deftly suggests the awkwardness of the terrain and of the evacuated child's encounter with his parents. More generally in *The Ship's Pasture*, Silkin makes use of a compression that might well seem mannored to indicate contingency and interdependence. This is underlined when images and points of reference are repeated not only within a particular sequence but from one section of the book to another—as when the acetylene gas-lighting of the Welsh house in "Autobiographical Stanzas" recurs as the "acetylene flare of bees, nectaring in subdued purple light" in "Winter bees".

While the satisfactions offered by *The Ship's Pasture* are cumulative ones—images of ship, furrow, nectar or rat gaining resonance as the volume progresses—there are strikingly successful individual poems in this collection too. The aspirations of 1916 Jesmond are admirably captured in "The achievers". "We stock the deer park" is a blistering indictment of the "intimate plague" of the arms race and "Leaving The Free Trade" moves from a realistic depiction of an evening in a pub to an evocative summary of Silkin's obsessive exploration of suffering, desire and the nature of freedom.

Sea people, land people

Tim Armstrong

KERI HULME
The Whodunnit / Ta Kaihau
240pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £10.95.
0-340-40174-5
MAURICE SHADBOLT
Season of the Jew
264pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £10.95.
0-340-39931-7

A character in one of Keri Hulme's short stories says, "I have a theory about deformities. People are either fearful in the company of a monster, or they will worship it." We might take this as a comment on Hulme's own work. There can be few other writers of undoubted power whose work is so full of deformity, both as subject-matter and in style. The body-count in these stories includes three amputations, one skull-crushing, a mass diamentering, infanticide, three fatal accidents and a riot. The theme of children who are abused or abandoned, familiar from *The Bone People*, is present in many of the stories. So too are the stylistic grotesqueries and over-writing of that novel: dialogue no one would ever speak, gobble nonsense about Ancient Ones, anthropomorphic musings on the "sea people" (whales).

These stories which seem to be apprentice-work written in imitation of Ian McEwan and others are poor, but in other stories Hulme raises delicate questions of class and culture in New Zealand in a way that no other writer has before. Her characters often speak in a half-literate post-1960s argot which we recognize as real. It is often the speech of the margins we hear of bikers, hippies, right-wing thugs. The best of the stories have an admirable sharpness of social observation. Those about trust and betrayal of trust are particularly striking: "While My Guitar Gently Sings" describes the hopes of Maori family places on a daughter, and her failure; "He Tauware Kawa, Ha Kawa Tauware" concerns a disappointment in an attempt at cultural revival; "A Nightsong for the Shining Cuckoo" points a moral about how to treat the crippled. "The Cicadas of Summer" succeeds in grafting a Mansfield-like evocation of childhood on to a horror story, and "Hooks and Feelers" deals with the aftermath of yet another amputation. Of the pieces dealing with middle-class life, "Kiteflying Party Doctor's Point" succeeds best, though it has an unnecessarily contrived ending. The overall impression created by this volume is of a writer of real ability who is beginning to control her craft and extend her range.

Maurice Shadbolt's latest work is another big New Zealand novel (one of a number in recent years: Hulme, Ian Wedde and Witi Ihimaera, among others, have all combined elements of Pacific mythology—Maori, whaling—with a concern for national identity). *Season of the Jew* covers some of the same ground as Ihimaera's *The Muriwhi*, published last year: the Te Kooti uprisings of the 1860s. But where Ihimaera's modernist technique allowed for the layering of historical documents and polemic, Shadbolt opens with an authorial note stating blandly that "most of this happened, and much in the manner described".

That is debatable. The story of the prophet Te Kooti and the Maori tribe of Israel which he proclaimed is presented through the experience of George Fairweather, an officer in the Imperial forces who resigns, becomes a painter, and then is drawn into the Poverty Bay rebellion. Fairweather begins as a thorough cynic, a chocolate-cream soldier (his taste for Shavian aporism never entirely leaves him), but gradually his ironic façade is broken down. His attempts to blunt the efforts of the land-hungry colonists to persecute the prophet fail. When things turn nasty with the infamous Matawhero massacre and the rape of his Maori lover (later his wife), he abandons his doctrine of "never mind" and becomes Te Kooti's most zealous pursuer.

The story of the military campaigns in the difficult interior is vividly told, and culminates in the counter-massacre at Ngatapa, where Te Kooti's male followers are slaughtered by the Maori militia of Major Kopapa. The remodeler of the novel deals with the fate of the one person Fairweather manages to save at Ngatapa, a Maori boy called Hamiora Pere. Pere becomes a scapegoat, and despite Fairweather's efforts, is tried and hanged by an establishment keen to make an example of him.

A historical note tells us that the book is partly an attempt to appease the ghost of the forgotten Hamiora, just as the author's surrogate in the novel assumes the boy that his name will be famous: "You are no more a *namo*. Never, never a nothing." Despite the best intentions and the historical understanding of the novelist, the false note in all this is obvious. History is packaged as individual experience and the "rescue" of Hamiora Pere. The European struggle for Maori land is naturalized in terms of Fairweather's gradual acceptance of his role in the province (having mocked the colonists, he becomes a landowner). The reader's own experience follows the same trajectory: irony, horror, involvement and resolution. And in the end, the novel, for all its competence and interest, too readily seems like another tract of territory inherited (after due process) from the past. These problems have never been more contentiously in New Zealand cultural life, but in Shadbolt's novel the liberal interpretation of history triumphs once again.

Tribal matters

Anthony Satin

DOMINIC COOPER
The Horn Fellow
170pp. Faber. £9.95.
0-57114614-7

Dominic Cooper's fourth novel is a densely written tale of power and sex set in a time when there were few things to trouble the average tribesman beyond hunting, worshipping and procreating. The novel opens with a young man called Theuda being chased by unknown hunters who, it turns out, wish to sacrifice him to their god. Theuda escapes and spends the night high up on the sacred hill where he is found, the following day, by Deor, one of the hunting tribesmen. When Deor realizes that Theuda is the uncaught sacrifice he declares him "battered", but predicts grief for the tribe for not killing him on the appointed day.

Deor brings Theuda to the village where he is accepted into the community, which worships a deer-god—the Horn Fellow—and whose chief is called the Tineman, literally the man at the point of the antler. Cooper brings the community to life as Theuda quickly establishes himself within the all-male elite of the tribe—when Deor becomes Tinaman, Theuda is appointed heir, or "tanist", and is acknowledged as a wordspeaker, one through whom

the god speaks.
The women of the tribe are kept apart from the men for all but the season of conception. Their relationship appears to be one of inequality mixed with an awareness of dependence on each other. The status quo is disturbed when Theuda falls in love with the beautiful, young Althoe and declares: "I am no longer alone."

Cooper's view of tribal hierarchy seems close to the Shakespearean idea of the body politic: when the head is disturbed, every part is affected. Just as Theuda is driven by forces beyond his control, so the patriarchal elders are subjected to the newly developed force of the women who demand an equal say in tribal matters and, in a thoroughly modern way, withhold their labour.

The Horn Fellow examines the eternal problems of power and love between men and women, but chooses to do so in a displaced, although entirely credible environment. The sense of uprooting is heightened by Cooper's dynamic and luminous use of language, by his persistent use of phrases whereby even inert objects are given active power. At times this technique works too well and one loses sight of what is being described. At others, the language is clear and the narrative appears too glib and inconsequential for the treatment it receives. When the balance is right, as it mostly is, *The Horn Fellow* is seen to live.

Buckling a swash

Peter Reading

STEPHEN MARLOWE
The Memoirs of Christopher Columbus
569pp. Cape. £10.95.
0-224-02413-2

Sooner or later some well-meaning critic is bound to ask, "Are you writing an autobiography, a historical novel, a romance or what?" forecasts Stephen Marlowe as Columbus (two-thirds of the way through his long (but not boring) book. At the most immediate level, Columbus's chronicles, from childhood to senility (swashbuckling evagation, a bit of roving *en route*, the vagaries of blood-curdling political history) are definitely material for picaresque.

For reasons suggested later, Cristóbal Colón, Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy and Governor of the Indies, charts his lifetime's adventures from a late-twentieth-century vantage-point. Accordingly, a not unamusing anachronistic US linguistic camp is employed—"Don't sell yourself cheap, it's bad for your image. Say, ten per cent. And you'll want to be appointed viceroy and governor." "I will?" "You bet your ass you will."

Fifteenth-century observations assume modern relevance. At Cape St Vincent, Henry the Navigator's adjutant peruses a map delineating Ireland the Great: "As the navigational heir to Prince Henry he knew Ireland to be a tea-ridden island west of far England, populated by religious zealots since the fifth century." Depiction of post-War of the Roses England also manages to be prophetic: "On the streets an olfactory disaster from tanneries and pigsties, impromptu latrines and discharged chamber pots . . . each man policed his own space as best he could. Death by violence left rotting corpses in random corners."

Marlowe is enabled not only to play games supplementing the historical and biographical record (as when he attributes to Colólo bitter

resentment of "that crass eponymous opportunist" Amerigo Vespucci—"Not that I'm miffed. What's in a name?"), but also to supply humanitarian commentary on historical events, notably on Spanish maltreatment of Indians and the atrocities of the Inquisition. Uncomfortably familiar racism is rife among the colonists—"it's well known that they [the indigenous] don't feel anything. Probably, like three-toed sloths or caterpillars, they aren't even aware of their own existence." These insensitive natives, aquashed into a hold for shipment to Spain as slaves, are seaisick, "have vomited on themselves and each other . . . flesh rubbed raw by manacles and fetters . . . urine dripping from higher to lower planks . . . baby slaves smeared with feces".

Back home in Valencia, Columbus casts a disparaging eye over a bout of public garroting and burning-alive by the Supreme and General Council of the Inquisition, and later, in Toledo, pays a Dantesque visit (guided by Brother Virgilio) to the various torturo departments of the Palace of the Inquisition ("Soon the oil began to aizzle, then the flesh, but as the objects were gagged, their voices did not rise much above the fluttering roar of the fire.")

At its most portentous level, the novel implies that Columbus is a variant of the Wndorling Jew (the apparent immortality of the narrow corroborates this, as does his tortuous dream where the Archbishop of Armenia tells Roger Wendover of St Albans about one Cartaphilus, map-lover, doomed to roam until the return of Christ . . .). But this is the least interesting aspect of a work in which, through storm and calm, a New (or Other) World is discovered, cigars and syphilis are introduced to Europe, and a human being experiences the deaths of loved ones and the loss of youth.

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Poor little rich belles

John Melmoth

ELLEN GILCHRIST
Drunk with Love
239pp. Faber. £9.95.
0571 146716

A number of Ellen Gilchrist's new stories require us to accept that things go harder for the rich and pampered than they do for the rest of us, that it is more painful to be loaded but miss out on that final, essential 1 per cent than it is to be used to having nothing in the first place. The fact, for example, that Sally in "The Blue-Eyed Buddha" is dying of kidney failure is supposedly more poignant because she is leaving behind lobster suppers and pools around the Virgin Islands. Gilchrist's poor little rich girls certainly take it to heart when reality fails to conform to their requirements.

Other stories make the opposite, more prosaic and obvious point that things are never so bad if one is able to cry all the way to the tennis/ yacht/bridge/supper club. In the title-story life seems meaningless to Freddy because Nora Joan does not love him; all he is left with are the trivial consolations of yuppie-dom – a beautiful house, paintings, books, friends, other women. If, as in the adolescent Rhoda's case, "The Expansion of the Universe" requires one to leave school and social triumphs in Harrisburg, Illinois and move to Franklin, Kentucky where everything that makes life worth living will have to be fought for again.

Fightin' an' feudin'

David Montrose

RICHARD RUSSO
Mohawk
418pp. Heinemann. £10.95.
0434659053
CATHIE PELLETIER
The Funeral Makers
286pp. Viking. £10.95.
0670 810763

Small-town USA (North-eastern variety) is the milieu for each of these first novels. Richard Russo's *Mohawk* is a declining leather town in upstate New York, Cathie Pelletier's *Mattagash* a lumber town whose rusticity and isolation are exceptional even by the standards of backwoods Maine. The similarities do not end there. Both novels are preoccupied with ties of blood and emotion. They share, too, a structure which intersperses the central plot with scenes from their characters' personal histories.

Set in 1967, the opening section of *Mohawk* revolves around the mysterious bond between two antithetical old men: upright Mather Grouse, a retired leather-cutter to precarious health, and Rory Gaffney, a detested one-time workmate who has long exerted a baneful influence on his life. Gaffney is the father of the "town moron", Wild Bill, fifteen years earlier a normal teenager (with a crush on Mather's daughter, Anne) until "damaged" in an inexplicable "accident". The clarification of these interconnected enigmas proceeds slowly, impeded as it is by the regular introduction of fresh characters – notably Mrs Grouse and Anne's son, Randall – and the piecemeal exploration of relationships past and present: between Mather and Anne; between Anne and her ex-husband, Dallas; between Anne and her cousin's wheelchair-bound husband, Dan, whom she adored even before she married; between Dallas and his brother's widow.

This peripheral abundance is all to the good, however, since the enigmas jointly prove something of a damp squib when unfolded early in the second part of the novel (the first having ended with Mather's funeral). The action has jumped five years; the focus switches to Randall, now a college dropout and dodger of the Vietnam draft. Circumstances equip him to exact unbloody vengeance against Rory on his grandfather's behalf; but at the climax of the novel – enacted, melodramatically, during a thunderstorm – the scheme goes haywire in a fashion that leads to three corpses and Randall's wrongful arrest for murder. Things end

one's material status helps – "It had better be a big house . . . It had better be the biggest house in that goddam town."

Either way, there is no nonsense about money not making any difference. Loot is the primary fact of life for the majority of Gilchrist's characters; it both shapes and inhibits their development. The possession of money may not consort easily with maturity, but there is no denying that it improves the appetite. Gilchrist's women are activated by an insouciant, practical rapaciousness which blurs the distinction between being drunk with love, drunk with power and just drunk. Rhoda is the paradigmatic case; in "Adoration", the iron willpower of the spoilt brat emerges as an almost mystical determination not to miscarry during her "ecstatic pregnancy". When Mrs Beadle in "The Young Man" wants a toy boy she orders one from a mail order catalogue. When he proves beautiful but dull she trades him for a woman with "long legs and a long waist. A singing voice. Piano skills." Her conception of what is due to her *amour propre* is nothing if not precise.

The instinct to devour everything that is put in front of them explains why so many of these Missouri belles become drunks or dieters. When Crystal starts drinking again, in "Traceless at Dawn", she silences the housekeeper's protests with a peroration on the importance of getting satisfaction: "I am going to die when all this is over . . . And I have not had my share of the stuff . . . I am tired of being hungry. To hell with it. I'm starving to death for

sunnily, however. Randall avoids both gaol and those sent to escape him for Uncle Sam, while Anne also elapses, severing the twin strings that bind her to Mohawk – love for Dan and filial duty – and lighting out for a new start in distant Phoenix.

Throughout its first section especially, *Mohawk* is an accomplished piece of fictional architecture, while the characterization is rarely less than competent (it is striking only in the case of Mrs Orouse, a domesticity-variant inexplicably determined to eradicate earthworms from her lawn). The novel's situations, though often have a touch, occasionally more than a touch, of soap opera about them: strangely, considering Russo's status as a *Granta*-published dirty realist. But then the incisive prose associated with the genre is also absent. So, too, is the conclusion: at 406 pages, *Mohawk*'s mainstream realism is decidedly overblown.

In *The Funeral Makers*, it is the summer of 1959. Marge, eldest of the three McKinnon sisters, descendant of Mattagash's founding fathers, is on her death-bed. Already at her side, the youngest sister, Sicily, who never left Mattagash either, alerts the third, Pearl, who lives in a more populous corner of the state. Pearl sets out for home, along with husband (Marvin Sr), son (Marvin Jr), daughter-in-law (Thelma) and grandchildren. On the road, mishap beset the family: squabbles, accidents, a mislaid child. Arriving at their destination, the two Maryvins (undertakers, both) busy themselves, a mile predictably, arranging "Mattagash's finest send-off" while awaiting

A plague on their houses

Allison Hughes

MARK CHILDRESS
A World Made of Fire
271pp. Sceptre. £3.95.
0340 402152

Stranger kio to Faulkner and Alice Walker, Mark Childress's *A World Made of Fire* reverberates in the mind like few recent novels. Firmly set in a forgotten corner of the southern United States in the decade 1909-1918, the book draws its strength from the dialects of the region's people, white and black. "Rabbit run over your grave?" they ask. "Oo wee, Devil! Doubt, how jump up and run out!" chants the ancient midwife, Little Brown Mary, leading her husband, Little Brown, to the grave. The novel returns obsessively to the words "blessed"

everything I need."

Gilchrist has doubtless discovered by now that being endlessly compared with Carson McCullers and Tennessee Williams can pall. None the less, she is self-consciously a Southern writer, and never more so than when she exploits the vein of steamy gothic that follows the course of the Mississippi. In "Memphis", Katherine Louise ("Baby Kate") challenges her kind's taboos against miscegenation. She is fascinated by her black lover's "size. His power, his hands, feet, mouth, dick, all that stuff." That matters will end tragically is never in doubt; like a modern Desdemona she does little to defend herself. Her aunt acknowledges that Baby's death is what the genre demands: "Anybody in my family could tell you version of this. This is the real story. Of whisky and slaves and bored women and death."

Drunk With Love fixes a talent to provoke in the process of being house-trained; the stories are not as nasty, funny or sexy as their predecessors. Even violent death is not what it was. Baby Kate's lover dispatches her with a good clean break of the spine, whereas in the earlier "Suicides" Philip went to work on himself with half the contents of a hardware store – "He bought saws and ice picks and hammers and knives and staplers and drills." The collection creates a sense of *déjà vu*, of things done well because they have been done before. The return appearances of Nora Joan and Rhoda reinforce this sense of familiarity, which compromises Gilchrist's more over-wrought effects.

Marge's expiration: "It really helps to have a head start like this . . . Most people don't know one of their loved ones has died until the very last minute . . ."

This no doubt sounds distinctly reminiscent of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, but Cathie Pelletier's story uses farce rather than grim humour. Uncomic relief occurs principally, in a subplot, through characters adduced by thwarted ambition: Ed, Sicily's alcoholic husband, whom she tricked into marriage, and Violet, a middle-aged "modern dancer" (ie stripper). A second subplot concerns the affair between Sicily's pudgy nymphomane of a daughter, Amy Joy, and one Chester Lee Gifford, a member of the clan who, in local society, have traditionally been the dregs to the McKinnons' cream. Sicily and Thelma also become acquainted (the former willingly, the latter unwillingly) with Gifford's conscience before the novel culminates, like *Mohawk*, in triple loss of life: Ed (suicide), Gifford (car crash) and Marge, whose demise has finally been precipitated by the intrusion of Pearl's obnoxious grandson, garbed as "a miniature Batman", into her room.

The Funeral Makers is an altogether leaner and sharper novel than *Mohawk*. Pelletier's farce, while hardly inspired, is deftly executed, and if its victims are two-dimensional, they are not really required to be otherwise. Polynancy, too, is deployed with a sure hand – except in the two closing chapters, where mawkishness gains the ascendancy. Time, I think, to bring out that dread epithet, "promising."

"swear", "sick", "sign" – each time with the meaning subtly twisted and the emotion heightened, until the atmosphere of doom becomes unbearable and the characters' minds crack.

The plot is pure Southern gothic, involving doubtful paternity, the burning down of an ancestral home, racial tension and vigilantes, an epidemic blamed on a wild crippled boy, and a girl-heroine who gains maturity by resisting him. But after almost 200 mesmerizing pages, capped by a rousing funeral oration on the significance of mysteries in everyday life, the story succumbs to sentimentality and senseless violence. The epidemic simply fades away, and the theme of the scapegoat becomes an amusingly validated culture and its vanishing. Mark Childress has succeeded in re-creating a vanished culture and in vanishing the author and, in doing so, has written an arresting first novel. *A World Made of Fire* is a masterpiece of Southern gothic, even when he falls short of being a novelist.

Young Americans

Roz Kaveney

JAMES ATLAS
The Great Pretender
239pp. Viking. £10.95.
0670 81461 X
PETER J. SMITH
Highlights of the Off-Season
344pp. Chatto and Windus. £10.95.
0701 31918

James Atlas's first novel is full of period detail and has an occasional period charm, which might derive from the conscientious application of memory to the recreation of a 19th-century adolescence, but could equally well mean that – once again – diaries have been reprinted. Inasmuch as he grows up at all, Ben Judd does so in Evanston, Illinois, and under constant pressure to be a serious intellectual from a doctor father who reads James Joyce aloud at dinner in an attempt to make his wife worthy of him. Ben shares with his father the general sense that life is about being a contributor to *Portion Review*, but is also rather interested in getting laid and having a good time; in his books *The Great Pretender* is moderately amusing, and occasionally moving, on the subject of trying to have your cake and eat it too. It is also, however, too obviously the sort of novel that its young hero is going to grow up and write: riddled with set-pieces of a rather predictable kind. In the funeral scene, for example, Ben's reactions are decent and humane, taking on board the feelings about tradition and continuity and change appropriate to a civilized person at such a time. His feelings are thoroughly gone through and thoroughly conventional; and conventional is the most apt word for this decent and rather dull novel.

On the way, there is much to enjoy: Ben's progress through high school, university and postgraduate work at Oxford is presented with a minimum of fuss; his sexual initiation and prudent avoidance of wilder shores – a threesome with his girlfriend's best friend, and having his hair stroked by Jean Genet – are put through no less expeditiously. If the earliest notation of his mental life rarely achieves a pitch of intellectual passion, it carefully avoids any hint of purple or pretentiousness. There are a few moments of real wit, as when Ben is arrested and held overnight for drunken driving, and knows that there will be nothing he can do to prevent his father describing the incident as *Kofkasque*. There is a slight sameness in the hindsight that allows a supposedly reformed present-day Ben to rebuke his younger self for the sexism of the main narrative, but smugness, in the end, is an intrinsic part of the novel's general atmosphere of earnest and continuous self-improvement.

There is no hint of any desire for self-improvement at any point in *Highlights of the Off-Season*, whose anti-hero, Sam, is quite smug about being a spoiled brat – and to some extent endearingly so. The only thing he has in common with Atlas's Ben is that both are young, American and male, and that both receive, early in their respective tales, a not especially welcome present of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (Sam disposes of the books as quickly as he can, albeit in what he represents to himself as a moment of absent-mindedness). Sam is the sort of boy who is always being thrown out of private schools for mayhem or indolence and always reckons that it seemed a good idea at the time. Exiled to the UK, Sam embarks on his air-fare and goes to Cape Cod to see an aunt, with whom he quarrels about the casting of Bogart's movies. In a mood of cineastic high dudgeon, he returns to New York, where he is incarcerated briefly in a mental hospital.

Stendhal this isn't, though there is something moderately gleeful in Sam's celebration of intelligent worthlessness. Some of the set-pieces here at least have the virtue of originality – notably in the New Year's Eve scene as Sam's drunken godfather's car goes round New York trying to make late bachelors at restaurants over the carphone. In his reporting of contemporary manners, Peter J. Smith proves himself a good "ultra-modern" even when he falls short of being a novelist, while he rolls out platitudes about the

Of truth and half-truth

Robin Robbins

FRANCIS BACON
The Essays
Edited by John Pitcher
287pp. Penguin. Paperback, £3.95.
0140432167
The Essays or Counsels, Civiill and Morall
Edited by Michael Kiernan
457pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.
0198126441
ALFRED DODD
Francis Bacon's Personal Life-Story
380pp. Rider. £12.95.
07136 12602

"Truth" and "law" are terms equally often at the tip of Bacon's pen in his *Essays or Counsels, Civiill and Morall*, as he entitled the first expanded version of 1625. John Pitcher in his introduction to the Penguin edition of the *Essays* thus rightly emphasizes the establishment of truth as Bacon's lifelong profession, from the first speech of the 1592 entertainment for Elizabeth I, *A Conference of Pleasure* (given in an appendix) – "the sovereignty of man [then] hidden in knowledge" – to the 1625 essay "Of Truth", in which truth's enquiry, knowledge, and belief are proclaimed "the sovereign good of human nature". And, as Pitcher points out, the essay begins with Pilate, fivously sceptical, judging Christ, and ends with Christ's return to judge an earth in which no faith will be found, thus interweaving the scientific truth of sense, the legal truth of reason, and the religious truth of belief.

Pitcher's judicious discussion of Bacon's use of the closed fist of logic and the open hand of rhetoric leads him to characterize Bacon's writing as "a rhetorical activity as much as a scientific one, the naming of things unimaginable (or unrevealed) as much as the description of real things . . . rhetoric and science are always in collusion". Thus, while Bacon claims to be concerned more with things than with words, in the end, "with no mathematics and very little practical experience, his genius could really only fulfil itself in words". On the credit side, Pitcher argues, Bacon's figures of speech for his ideas (or rather the ideas of pre-Socratic philosophers, such as the "dry light" of Heraclitus – in the received mistranslation – or "truth's deep well" of Democritus) "are very close to scientific hypothesis, the faculty of theory which Bacon is often accused of having undervalued". On the debit side is the writer's occasional falling into the very trap he denounced in *The Advancement of Learning* – of caring more for words than for matter, more for systematic pattern than for exact expression of nothing more or less than factual truth.

Expounding the method of Democritus, Bacon wrote in Aphorism I. 51 of the *Novum Organum* that, rather than resolve nature into abstractions, like the endlessly disputing scholastic philosophers, his purpose was to dissect her into parts. The Latin version of the *Essays* he accordingly entitled *Interiora Rerum*, "the insides of things", and so might well have emulated Robert Burton, and called the third English version *The Anatomy of Wisdom* (sharing as he does, moreover, titles and topics not only with Montaigne but with Montaigne's friend and follower Pierre Charron, whose *De la sagesse* was translated in about 1608 as *Of Wisdom*).

But the essays are counsels more civil than moral, and far from being concerned predominantly with epistemology. They treat of religious truth, whose realm is distinguished in the "Prometheus" chapter of *The Wisdom of the Ancients* (also appended by Pitcher) from that of human sense and reason, but more substantially, as in the invocation of legal along with religious judgment in "Of Truth", of the dealings between man and society. It was William Harvey's opinion, according to John Aubrey, that Bacon wrote philosophy "like a Lord Chancellor" – in the *Essays* we may see not only the prescriptive judge, but the legal mind concerned with the "better case", the more plausible, the more practical and effective, rather than the pure and simple truth. In fact, the words *business*, *fortune*, *honour*, *wealth*, *power*, *riches*, as well as *religion*, *law*, *truth*, *wisdom*, *knowledge*, *science*, *reason*, *virtue*, *beauty*, *life*, *death*, *hell*, *heaven*, *god*, *devil*, *angel*, *ghost*, *witch*, *magick*, *alchemy*, *astrology*, *metaphysics*, *philosophy*, *poetry*, *music*, *architecture*, *mechanics*, *agriculture*, *commerce*, *navigation*, *war*, *peace*, *love*, *hate*, *friendship*, *enmity*, *ambition*, *modesty*, *pride*, *humility*, *generosity*, *avarice*, *greed*, *kindness*, *cruelty*, *mercy*, *justice*, *injustice*, *law*, *equity*, *inequity*, *truth*, *falsehood*, *good*, *evil*, *virtue*, *vice*, *honor*, *dishonor*, *reputation*, *disreputation*, *life*, *death*, *hell*, *heaven*, *god*, *devil*, *angel*, *ghost*, *witch*, *magick*, *alchemy*, *astrology*, *metaphysics*, *philosophy*, *poetry*, *music*, *architecture*, *mechanics*, *agriculture*, *commerce*, *navigation*, *war*, *peace*, *love*, 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*disreputation*, *life*, *death*, *hell*, *heaven*, *god*, *devil*, *angel*, *ghost*, *witch*, *magick*, *alchemy*, *astrology*, *metaphysics*, *philosophy*, *poetry*, *music*, *architecture*, *mechanics*, *agriculture*, *commerce*, *navigation*, *war*, *peace*, *love*, *hate*, *friendship*, *enmity*, *ambition*, *modesty*, *pride*, *humility*, *generosity*, *avarice*, *greed*, *kindness*, *cruelty*, *mercy*, *justice*, *injustice*, *law*, *equity*, *inequity*, *truth*, *falsehood*, *good*, *evil*, *virtue*, *vice*, *honor*, *dishonor*, *reputation*, *disreputation*, *life*, *death*, *hell*, *heaven*, *god*, *devil*, *angel*, *ghost*,

Beauclerk's bureaucracy

Frank Barlow

JUDITH A. GREEN
The Government of England under Henry I
303pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.
0521 332315

Although modern historians have deprived Henry I of his nickname "Beauclerk", they have transferred to him, from his grandson, Henry II, the honour of being the founder of the medieval English royal bureaucratic government. Two documents have ensured that his reign should be the centre round which all constitutional and institutional history of the Norman period revolves. The first is the Pipe Roll of his thirty-first year (1129-30), the earliest financial accounts of the annual Exchequer audit to have survived, and without sequel until the second year of Henry II (1155-6). The other is the *Constitutio Domus Regis*, the establishment of the royal household, drawn up, it seems, for the information of his successor, the unfortunate Stephen.

The wave of revivification was inaugurated in 1962 by R. W. Southern in his celebrated Rieght Lecture, "The place of Henry I in English History", followed in 1963 by H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, in their explosive *The Governance of Medieval England*. And while we wait C. Warren Hollister's full-scale biography, which has been on the stocks since the 1960s, the periodical literature grows apace, fed largely by Hollister himself. Judith Green, who has already published four useful articles on administrative and financial matters, now pulls them together and rounds them off. Her monograph, developed ultimately from a doctoral thesis, is, however, more restricted than the title might suggest. "Govern-

ment" here means "royal government". Vast areas of government, particularly baronial and ecclesiastical, which, when royal government almost collapsed under Stephen, saved the country from anarchy, are completely ignored. The book remains an expanded commentary on the Pipe Roll of Michaelmas 1130.

Henry was in many ways an admirable man and king. A bold adventurer who made his own fortune against the odds, a brave soldier who did not shrink pitched battles, a fine leader and a clever manipulator of men and institutions, he gave England thirty-three years of peace in which the Church flourished as seldom before and the towns and trade recovered from the shock of the Norman Conquest. Especially, he transmuted the harsh and exploitative financial and judicial expedients of an occupying power

into the instruments of a legitimate authority. Yet most historians have felt ill at ease with him. The least pleasant of the Norman kings, cruel, avaricious, gluttonous, a cold lecher, soured by the loss of his only legitimate son and much of the *jeunesse dorée* in the wreck of the White Ship in 1120, and tormented by nightmares as his troubles increased, he can be regarded as ultimately a complete failure, with Stephen's reign his epitaph. That his diplomatic contrivances led to the "Angvin Empire" of his grandson and great-grandsons was not necessarily because of his wisdom and prudence.

Henry II always appealed on matters English to the customs of his grandfather, and the pattern of government which Henry I created does indeed deserve the closest scrutiny.



A mercenary delousing a fellow warrior, painted by an unknown artist in 1517 for the Rehlinger family chapel in the Augsburg Dominican church, and now in the Staatsgalerie, Augsburg. It is reproduced here from Die Stadt im Späten Mittelalter by Harmut Boockmann (357pp. Munich: C. H. Beck. DM98. 3 406 31565 8).

Green knows the sources and literature inside out and is blessed with the ability to write clearly and judiciously on the several topics she has chosen. Her main offering—more than half the book—is a study of the king's servants, particularly the sheriffs, and she provides a most useful bibliographical appendix on all *ministri* who occur in the Pipe Roll of 1130. This section is prefaced by relatively short chapters on the royal entourage, Bishop Roger of Salisbury and the Exchequer, finance, justice and local (royal) government.

Originality is impossible in a field in which so many labour, and this study does not greatly alter, in whole or in part, the currently accepted view of the reign. There is, though, much minor rectification and some useful views of controversial matters. Green is one of those who think that J. H. Le Patourel went too far in trying to synthesize a "Cross-Channel kingdom", ruled by a "king-dux", out of two entities which remained stubbornly distinct. She does not like Southern's suggestion that Henry encouraged the "rise of the gentry". Although an evolutionist, and rejecting Richardson and Sayles's view that the Exchequer and with it the Justiciarship of England and Normandy were created as a single measure, she seems occasionally to be unduly reluctant to allow precedents (a fourteenth-century cartulary copy of an account of a case in 1096, when it contains obviously authentic detail, is not to be rejected simply because of the date of transmission). Rufus and Raoul Flambard are clearly in many things forerunners of Henry and Roger of Salisbury.

All the same, if we judge this monograph on its own terms there is not much to criticize. The scholarship is sound, the tone good-mannered and the final summing-up a model of clarity and good sense.

Seeing off the sinner

John Bossy

ELISABETH VODOLA
Excommunication in the Middle Ages
281pp. University of California Press. £29.95.
0520 049993

One of Hitler's gifts to English-speaking history has been a knowledge of the canon law, imported by the late Walter Ullmann to Cambridge and by Stephan Kuttner to California. Some may think California a strange place to be studying the medieval Church's sanctio of social exclusion against moral transgressors, but this is a very handy little book, which will tell you all you want to know about the theory of the subject from the early Church to Luther. It will not tell you so much about the practice: the most substantial contribution on that side still seems to be Lucien Febvre's piece on excommunication for debt in the *Franchise Comté*. But there is plenty in the theory to keep the mind occupied.

The term "excommunication" has always had an alarming and sinister sound, as if its object might fall down dead as soon as the sentence was pronounced; this is not surprising, since one of its sources is the curse or anathema, which might be hoped to produce that effect. The gentler source was the penitential practice of the early Church, in which the sinner was excluded from the Eucharist and the society of other Christians until he reformed. In its medieval form excommunication was a mixture of both: on the whole the relatively benevolent "penitential aspect" prevailed, but something fiercer and less manageable continued to surface in the idea that excommunication was contagious to all who came into contact with the excommunicate, and that it consigned the excommunicate to damnation. Both Aquinas and Luther explained that the second point was untrue, and various popes tried to do something about the first. They gave the impression of trying to teach polite behaviour to a monster.

The dynamic in excommunication was the ceremonial exclusion from human or Christian relationships, which appealed to the vindictiveness never far from the surface of medieval Christendom. As the practice of public pen-

ance decayed, excommunication ceased to produce such melodramatic effects as the appearance of the Emperor Henry IV in the snow at Canossa; on the other hand, like other features of medieval Christendom, it became democratized in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Readily available from the courts Christiana for technical infringements of their jurisdiction, it was an effective weapon for harassing your neighbours. The Council of Trent did well to reform it, though there was probably some connection between its willingness to do this and its difficulties in envisaging the Church as a genuine society. This difficulty was, at any rate, the issue in the acrimonious and extremely interesting dispute in the thirteenth century between the canonist Pope Innocent IV, who wanted to reform excommunication by restricting its consequences, and the even more distinguished canonist Hostiensis, who did not. Some of Hostiensis's remarks, such as that one of the Pope's more important decisions had come "off the top of his head", will help to restore faith in the fundamental soundness of medieval Christendom. (So will the recommendation of Johannes Teutonicus on the issue of cutting off relations with one's excommunicate friends: Do not do this in a hurry if it is extremely inconvenient.)

The only unsatisfactory passage in Elisabeth Vodola's most welcome book is a rare theoretical comment at the beginning of Chapter Four. She says that "excommunication's legal effects were the medieval expression of a much broader historical phenomenon, derived from ancient law and passed on to modern societies, the hierarchical organizing of social groups by differing degrees of legal status. Though sometimes punitive, the reduction or withdrawal of legal rights was principally intended to order society according to social and moral values." This place of deference to sociology sticks out like a quotation from Marx in a textbook of Soviet biology. It does not seem at all supported by what she has afterwards to say about excommunication inhibiting people's right to sue or otherwise act at law; and what "ordering society according to social values" is, Heaven knows. If historians of canon law cannot see that the concept "Society", as here understood, is one that they absolutely do not need, perhaps they should not have gone to California at all.

Amicability by decree

David Starkey

G. W. BERNARD
War Taxation and Rebellion
208pp. Brighton: Harvester. £25.
07108 11268

Time, the chief revisionist, has cut the Amicable Grant of 1525 down to size. Described in 1929 as "perhaps the most violent financial exaction in English history", in 1987 its top-rate tax band for the laity of 16.6 per cent seems modestly itself. But in his new study G. W. Bernard seeks to take the process of revision a stage further. Events, he argues, were more complicated than has been supposed; motives, however, were simpler.

On the first point he carries conviction. The Grant was imposed to take advantage of the unique opportunity offered by the defeat and capture at Pavia of Francis I of France by the forces of England's ally, Charles V. But not only was England's commitment to war uncertain; the government also shifted ground on the Grant itself. It began as a flat-rate levy. By April 25, resistance, particularly in London, changed it into a negotiable benevolence. The cohesional only fuelled resistance, which flared into open rebellion in East Angles. In early May, the government accepted the inevitable and the whole affair was abandoned with not one penny paid.

But what of the motives of the actors? Here modern historians have shown a penchant for what Dr Bernard calls "devious" explanations. Some have Wolsey—supposedly pacifist and pro-French—rejoice at the failure of the Grant because it made war impossible. Others, less absurdly, have suggested that leading commissioners like Warham and Norfolk connived at resistance or even encouraged it out of hatred for Wolsey. Bernard is surely right to deny this. But it does not follow, as he seems to think, that all was sweetness and light within the élite. Warham and Norfolk banded protest more gently than they themselves were to do later in Kent in 1528-9 and in the North in 1537. While Warham, in the very letter that Bernard cites at length to prove his "pacifist" self, obliged to insist that "I would I be thus to write... if

it were not my true and faithful intent". Obviously Wolsey had his doubts, even if Bernard does not.

But one historian emerges unscathed from Bernard's revisionism: the contemporary chronicler, Edward Hall. Bernard challenges Hall on only one point of fact—the date of the revocation of the Grant—and it is clear that Hall's Bernard who has misread, not Hall who has erred. This matters because Hall's interpretation is diametrically opposed to Bernard's. Bernard sees the rejection of the Grant as a result of poverty, or rather (since, as he rather sleepily concedes, the mid-1520s were years of prosperity) inability to pay following the unusually heavy burden of taxation since 1522. Hall, on the other hand, emphasizes constitutional objections. And, despite Bernard's denials, with good evidence. Hall says that while the clergy acknowledged that they were obliged to pay anything granted in convocation, they denied they were similarly bound by a royal commission; Warham's report confirms this to the letter. Again Warham is our witness that in Kent at least the laity, far from opposing the royal claim of "necessity" only by a plea of "poverty", moved immediately to challenge the rationality of the king's foreign policy.

True, the non-parliamentary nature of the Grant, which figures so largely in Hall, is not mentioned by the other (very scanty) sources. But Parliament is not the only locus of the constitution. Bernard passes over in silence the reminder from Norfolk and Suffolk, who had their hands full with the near-rebellion in East Angles, that "we never saw the time so needful for the king's Highness to call his council unto him". Yet seven months later, in January 1526, the Eltham Ordinances made the first attempt at setting up a proto-privy council. And three years later still, on Wolsey's overthrow by the two dukes, the conciliar scheme was put into practice.

Bernard would no doubt reject such deductions as "presumptuous". Yet his brand of revisionism hardly presents a plausible alternative. Englishmen, it seems, were happy to part with their property to the Crown to the limits of indigence; councillors, it appears, worked harmoniously and without recrimination on a policy that was both "ambitious and ineffective". It will not take time, I think, to reveal the insufficiency of this sort of history.

Among the journals

Byzantine and Greek Studies

Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
Volume 9, 1984/5 and Volume 10, 1986
£12 per year. Centre for Byzantine Studies and
Modern Greek, University of Birmingham,
PO Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT.

Academic journals are not often the subject of take-over bids but *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* changed editors as the result of just such a bid. How has it fared, now that it has been "radicalized" and "rejuvenated", as two of the articles in the first issue to appear under the new dispensation somewhat prematurely (if not indeed presumptuously) proclaim?

If the old *BMGS* was a monument to bourgeois empiricism, contributors to the new have hastened to make up for lost time by injecting a heavy dose of that theory which, so we are told, "is always [sic] a sign of a (hesitant) crisis threatening the foundations of orthodoxy". The editor, for instance, in his survey of Byzantine history-writing and contemporary debates (volume Nine), contrives to make virtually no mention of either Byzantium or its historians. He does, however, manage to alert us to the "masculine pride" and "academic careerism" of "a male dominated scholarly world". With only five women out of some twenty-three contributors to volumes Nine and Ten there is clearly still scope for some affirmative action.

It seems odd that those so critical of the supposed elitism of traditional scholarship should choose to frame their criticisms in an arcane private language of their own. Whatever the faults of the old *BMGS* (and I write as a former member of its editorial board) it was always at least intelligible. It would none the less be misleading to give the impression that *BMGS* is now wholly given over to the discussion of the "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis" or to T. S. Kuhn's theory of paradigms. Margaret Alexiou's fascinating reappraisal of the twelfth-century Prodicus poems (volume Ten) and Catia Galateriotou's study of holy women and witches in Byzantium (volume Nine) afford striking confirmation that it is not inherently necessary to throw out the empirical baby with the conceptual bathwater. In more traditional vein, David Holton affords a valuable analysis of the popular vocabulary of the *paradiaphysis* General Makriyanis, and there is much else of substance interspersed among the "politically aware Greek criticism".

For all the theoretical pyrotechnics in these two issues, however, there is no indication that a solution has been found to the basic problem besetting the old *BMGS*. It still remains a hodgepodge of articles on vastly disparate themes and chronological periods. Is anyone with an interest in the *Comes Horreorum* likely to be at all concerned with the role of the European Community in Greek politics, or vice versa? Is there, indeed, enough good material to support two scholarly journals in the field, *BMGS* and the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, which emerged from the schism between the British and American editorial boards of the old *BMGS*? Might there not be a case for "de-ghettoizing" this particular field of study and thus avoiding a situation where a small group of contributors write over and over again for the same journal? On the other hand, Vasilis Lambropoulos tells us that if we do not want to isolate Modern Greek studies then "we must soon face the combined tasks of epistemological reflexivity, historical awareness and political responsibility". If this really is the case then it might be preferable for them not merely to be isolated but to be quarantined.

Richard Clogg

Labour History

International Labor and Working-Class History
No 29, Spring, and No 30, Fall, 1986.
£26 per year. University of Illinois Press, 58 E. Gregory Dr, Champaign, Illinois 61820.

"Labour and working-class history" is a subject studied differently in different places. In Europe, the approach has been shaped by strong Marxist and revolutionary traditions; in Britain the chief influence has been the unions linked to the Labour Party. In the United States, despite firm foundations laid by John R. Commons and the Wisconsin School (indeed, some would argue because of them), labour history became at times little more than a branch of management studies.

Since the 1960s, however, American labour history has emerged as a fully fledged subject on its own. One of the major steps along the way was the founding in the 1970s by Robert F. Wheeler of the journal *International Labor and Working-Class History*. Pioneers can still recall the old foolscap format and typewriter-like printing which made *ILWCH* seem like the *samizdat* of labour history. Wheeler died tragically young, but is remembered on the mast-

head of the journal, which now appears in more conventional shape and size. The current editor is David Montgomery of Yale University (this year's Visiting Harmsworth Professor at Oxford), who with such figures as David Brody and Melvyn Dubofsky has played a central role in the revival of labour studies in the United States.

The original purpose of the journal was to create links between scholars in every country studying labour history. This is still maintained. The latest volume, for example, a special issue on the Popular Front, has contributions on the situation in America, Britain, France and Spain. However, it has to be pointed out that all the articles are by Americans, with "foreigners" only getting a look-in with book reviews.

One of the most interesting of these reviews is by Hywel Francis of a book by another Welshman, D. Hywel Davies, on Saunders Lewis and the Welsh Nationalist Party between 1925 and 1945. Francis notes that its leaders for the most part sympathized, not with the Popular Front, but with Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain even at the expense of support for Czechs, Catalans and Basques. The whole number is introduced by a thoughtful editorial asking why the Popular Front, which flourished only briefly and fairly ineffectively in the 1930s, should still haunt us fifty years later.

The spring 1986 number of *ILWCH* celebrated another anniversary: the centenary of the Haymarket Incident. This episode was crucial in launching May Day, the American labour movement and, as John Laslett argues in another valuable contribution, the labour upsurge in Britain which led to the "new unionism" of the late 1880s. Again, though the articles deal with subjects from France, Germany and Europe in general as well as Chicago, the contributors are mainly Americans.

The journal carries an invaluable full listing of current research in the field. In keeping with modern trends in scholarship, *ILWCH* examines the broader topic of working-class social history, not just the trade unions and political parties which preoccupied earlier writers. Sometimes whole numbers are largely given over to debate and controversy among historians. This can, of course, result in an arid academicism, but can also spark illuminating debate. All in all, no comparable journal in the field of labour history embraces such a wide area of study.

Patrick Renshaw

Slavonic Studies

The South Slav Journal
Volume 9, No. 3-4; autumn-winter 1986
£10 per year. 7 Chesterford Gardens, London NW3 7DD.

An indulgently hospitable hybrid, the *South Slav Journal* has for nine years of occasionally irregular publication opened its columns to a macédoine of exiles, academics, publicists and dissidents whose only common denominator is an interest in south-eastern Europe in general and Yugoslavia in particular. Irreconcilable anti-communists of dubious democratic pedigree rub shoulders with liberal-minded pluralists keen to support similar trends in Yugoslavia; young lecturers in search of a free book for review or an easy citation appear alongside establishment figures still enamoured of the heroic phase of Yugoslav socialism.

The current number (hot off the offset litho despite its cover date) is characteristically eclectic in content and uneven in quality. There are historical features both complete and "to be continued" (an annoying practice in what has become a semi-annual). Of the former, what looks a promising study of the wartime Croatian state's perverse ideology of "aryanism" turns out to be a superficial gloss; while a piece on Garibaldi's grandsons' scheme to raise a red shirt band on the Slnonika front in 1915 degenerates into an embarrassing exercise in Italian self-congratulation.

An alarmist analysis of Yugoslavia's increasing economic dependence on the Soviet Union by Marko Milivojević combines mixed and menacing metaphor (putting one's "head in the lion's mouth" is to be avoided "like the plague") with fierce cold war, but is none the less of interest. A meditation on the national question by Aleksa Djilas concludes that only democratic reform can ensure the future of the vast majority of Yugoslavs condemned by history and geography to live together. As a basic primer on Yugoslavia's multinational essence this short and lucid article deserves the widest possible readership.

There are also documents old and new, including last October's stirring appeal to the Federal Assembly by the Belgrade-based Committee for the Defence of Freedom of Thought and Expression for the establishment of true democracy and the rule of law. A country which would be notable for its lack of

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JOURNALS

Translations into English of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* have not been very numerous though they include a proso version first published in French by Caxton and in 1717 Sir John Denham's version in English. Garth assembled a text from versions of the poem by Dryden, including large parts of the poem by Dryden, one by Pope, several by Addison. A. D. Melville in his new translation, which was first published in 1913, is the only version of the poem in English to be reprinted in its entirety. (480pp. Oxford, £3.50. 0 19281691 8) The *Metamorphoses* had been, in English, a favourite subject for elegiac couplets, the right form of an heroic version would no doubt be heroic couplets as were perfected by Dryden and Pope. But who reads Dryden or Pope for the purpose of translating? Mr. Melville thinks that the match for Ovid's hexameters is in form the elegiac couplet. The verse which is "taut, swift, elegant, sonorous". He also allows himself an occasional rhyming couplet, for at times the hexameters seem almost to break the laws of which they were so fond.

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